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THE MEDIEVAL WOMEN WHO FOUGHT FOR JERUSALEM

HISTORY MAGAZINE

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Elizabeth Barrett Browning's remarkable life

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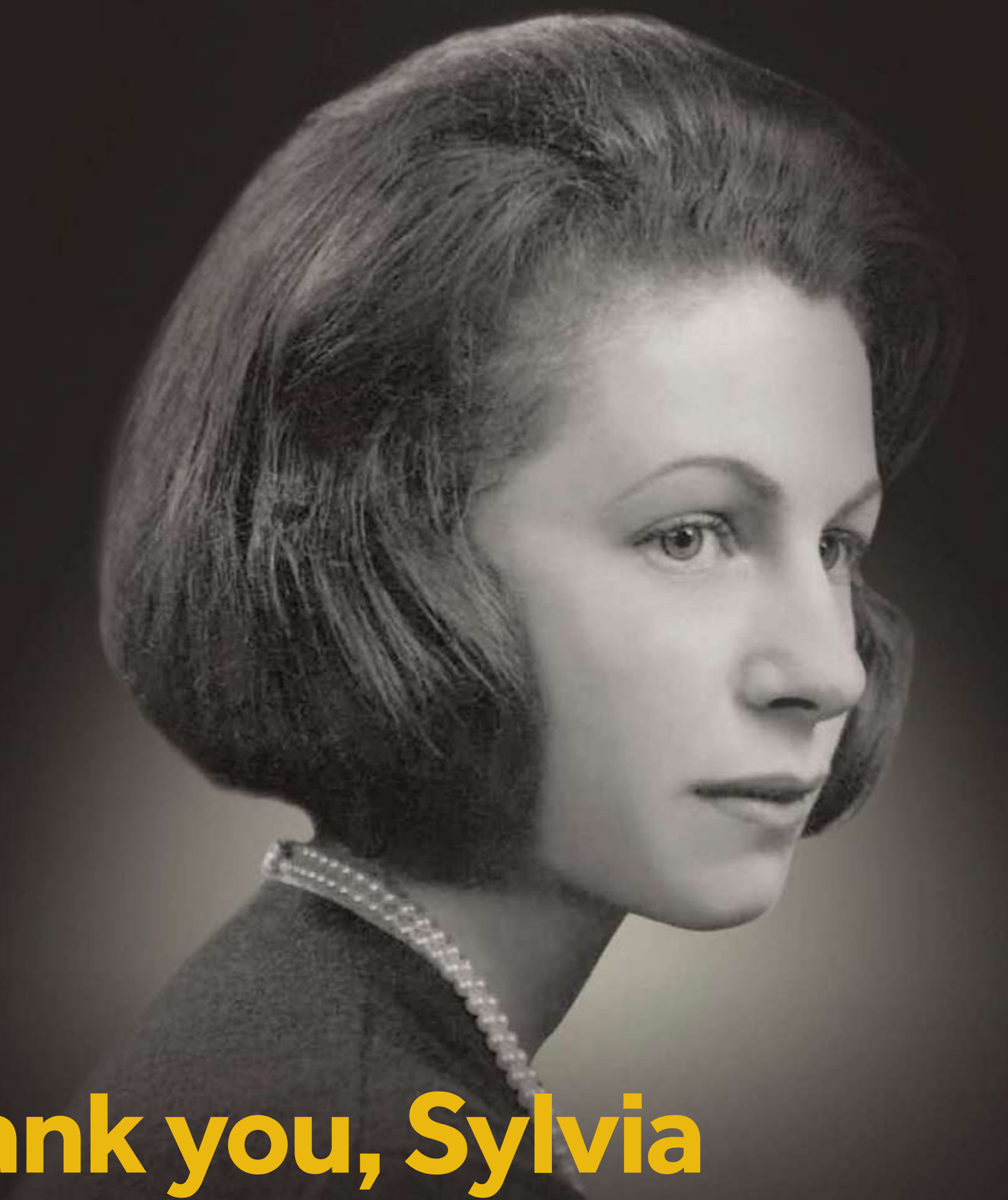

Thank you, Sylvia

Sylvia left a gift in her Will to help conquer Stroke

The first we knew of Sylvia was when we received notification of the gift she'd left us in her Will. Shortly after, a beautiful story of a much-loved woman began to unfurl.

Friends remembered Sylvia's kind-heart and her wish to help others. She spent part of her adult-life caring for her mother, and developed a passion for medicine. Becoming a medical secretary was her next step and, in the course of her career, she discovered the devastating impact a stroke could have on people and their families. She saw that research and treatment were vastly under-funded, and she decided to remember the Stroke Association in her Will.

Sylvia's gift has helped fund our work to conquer stroke. She's supported research to prevent and treat stroke, and she's helped care for survivors. And that's something you can do too – in the same way.

If you would like to learn more about remembering the Stroke Association in your Will, please get in touch.

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WELCOME

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

MARCH 2021

"I'm writing this a few weeks into 2021, and so far the dramatic news agenda of 2020 shows little sign of abating. Here in the UK we're in lockdown – although there are grounds for hope with the vaccination programme well under way. Meanwhile, soon after we sent our last issue to press, **Trump supporters launched an astonishing attack** on the US Capitol. The events in Washington were extraordinary, but were they truly unprecedented? In *Behind the News*, on page 10, we set them in the context of America's turbulent past.

Assuming the pandemic has subsided, next year should see the **Bayeux Tapestry on display in Britain**. In advance of its arrival, our content director, David Musgrove, has co-written a book on the Tapestry, and in this issue he and Michael Lewis reveal some of the key moments of 1066 that were excluded from the embroidery. That's on page 41, and do also check out our new podcast series on the Bayeux Tapestry at *historyextra.com/bayeux-tapestry-podcast*.

Elsewhere this month, our cover feature (page 22) sees Nick Lloyd revisit the story of **the western front**, arguing that far from being a futile stalemate, it witnessed a military revolution. Meanwhile, Katherine Pangonis and Fiona Sampson reflect on the lives of powerful women from very different eras, with articles on **crusader queens** (page 34) and the **Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (page 72).

I hope you enjoy the issue and that you're all keeping well in these unusual times.

Rob Attar
Editor

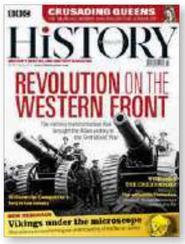
THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Sathnam Sanghera
I began writing my book much before the recent Black Lives Matter protests, and so it's been quite surreal to see my niche interest become a massive concern. **Sathnam considers how the legacy of imperialism still pervades modern society on page 78**

David Musgrove
What really struck me while writing (with Professor Michael Lewis) our new book on the Bayeux Tapestry was the bits of the 1066 story that are not included within it. **David and Michael examine the events and people the Tapestry excludes on page 41**

Katherine Pangonis
Writing my first book took me from the ruins of the Middle East to the great libraries of western Europe. In Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli and Tyre I came as close as I could to the world of the lost crusader queens. **Katherine uncovers the forgotten queens of the crusader era on page 34**

MORE FROM US



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COVER: TWO LARGE BRITISH GUNS ON THE WESTERN FRONT, 1916 – ALAMY. ILLUSTRATION OF MELISENDE BY LYNN HATZIUS. A 1,200-YEAR-OLD SMALLPOX-INFECTED VIKING SKELETON IN OLAND, SWEDEN – THE SWEDISH NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD. THIS PAGE: STEVE SAYERS/BBC

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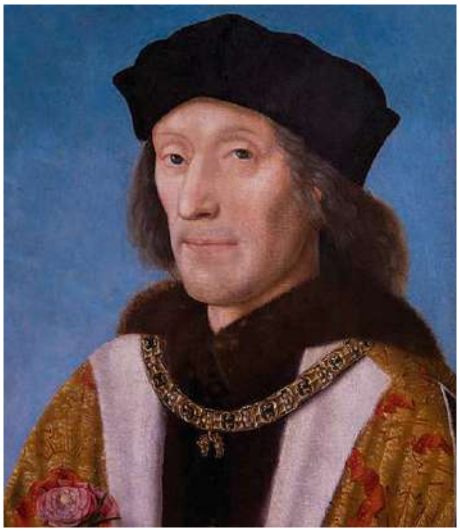
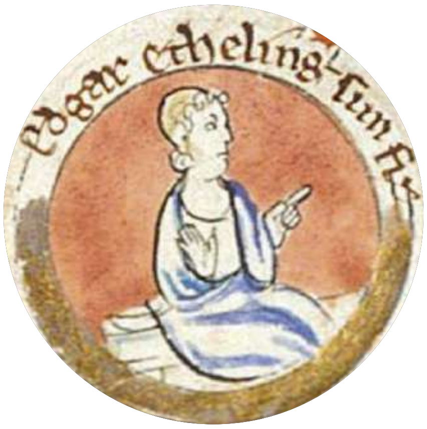
Fiona Sampson delves into the life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a poet and pioneer of her era



Find out how the Tudors propelled themselves from north Wales to the throne of England, on page 66



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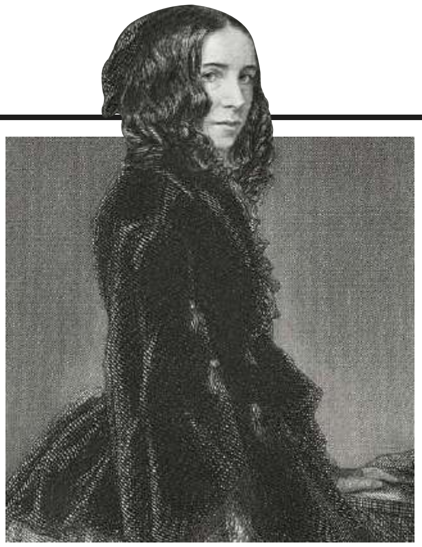

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ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

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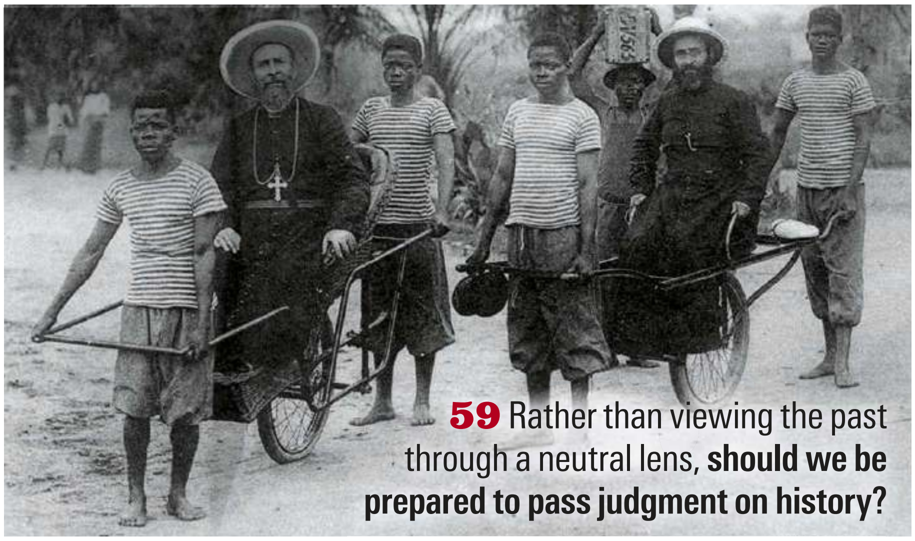

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Turn to page 22 to read more about the impact of tanks (like this British Mark IV) on the western front

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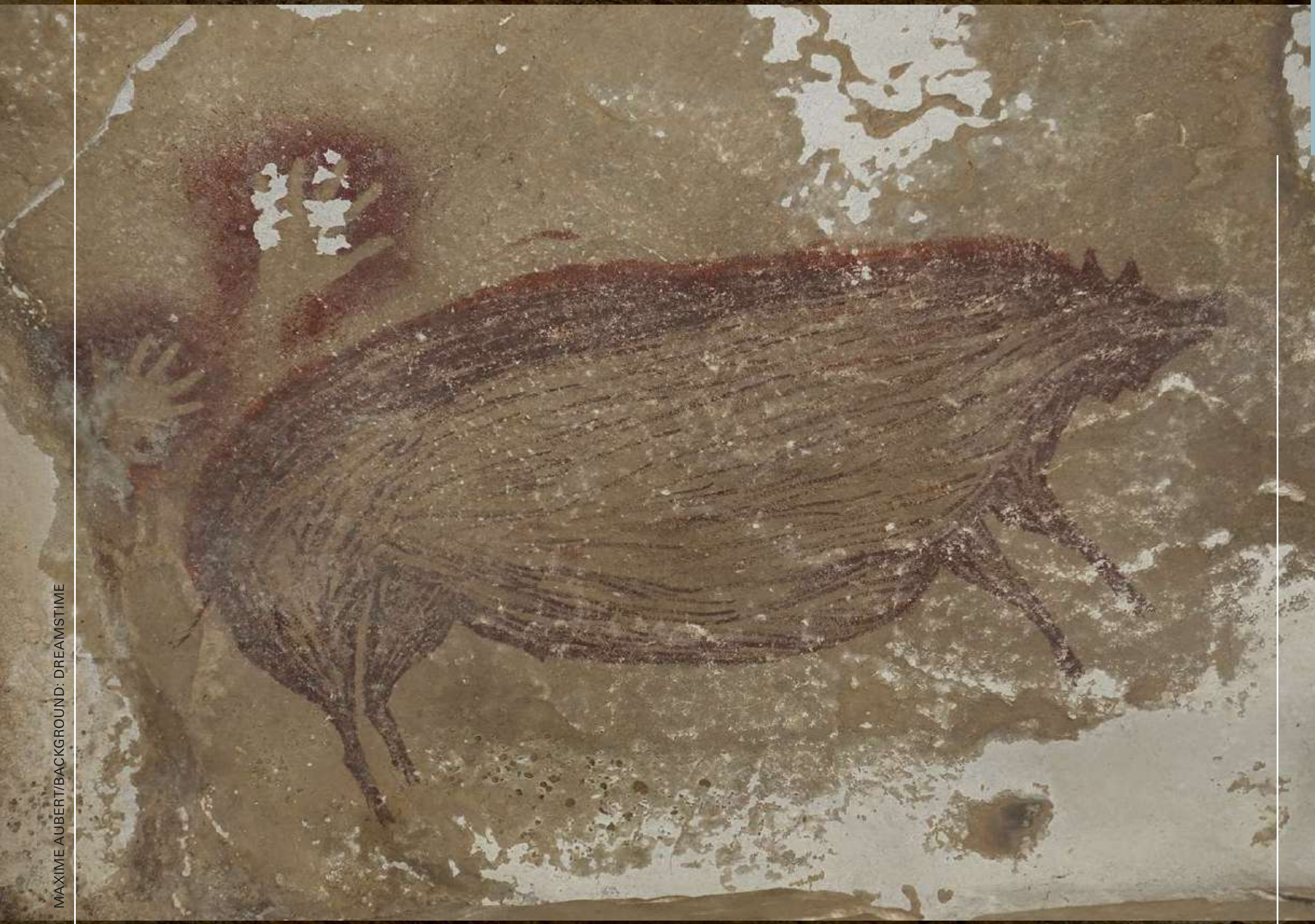
EYE-OPENER

Warts and all

Rendered at life size using dark red pigment, and featuring two handprints above its hairy back, this depiction of a wild "warty pig" dates from at least 45,500 years ago – making it the world's oldest known animal cave painting.

The picture was found in a cave in a remote valley on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, and it offers the earliest evidence of human settlement in the area. It appears to be part of a wider narrative scene featuring two other pigs whose images have only been partially preserved.

These Sulawesi warty pigs have been hunted by humans for thousands of years, and the species is a key feature of artwork found elsewhere in the region. Experts hope that this latest find, made in 2017 and revealed in the *Science Advances* journal in January, might tell us more about early human migrations – as well as heralding further discoveries on the island.



MAXIME AUBERT/BACKGROUND: DREAMSTIME

Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS

The write profile

For Twitter history-lovers, the UK's return to lockdown offered a chance to catch up on books they had missed first time around – particularly biographies. **ANNA WHITELOCK** joined the club

One of the very few benefits of returning to lockdown living, for some of us, is having the time to read – and Twitter is always a reliable source of book recommendations. **Helen McCarthy** (@HistorianHelen) asked for nominations of "the best historical biographies of all time – any period or geography, scholarly or popular". **John Gallagher** (@earlymodernjohn) was quick out of the blocks, suggesting Lucy Hughes-Hallett's 2013 biography of Italian poet, playwright and journalist Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose First World War experiences made him a national hero. Gallagher praised *The Pike* as "propulsive and unputdownable (often said, very rarely true), and formally incredibly exciting".

One of my colleagues at Royal Holloway, University of London, **Edward Madigan** (@MadiganEdward) recommended "*Negro With a Hat*, Colin Grant's 2008 biography of [Jamaican political activist] Marcus Garvey; a vivid portrait of a flawed but fascinating man, and a really insightful journey through Caribbean, African-American and anti-colonial history of the early 20th century".

Jonathan Healey (@SocialHistoryOx) picked "Catherine Drinker Bowen's 1957 biography of [Elizabethan barrister and politician] Edward Coke, *The Lion and the Throne*. Academically very dated now, of course, but a wonderfully colourful read."

Dr Charlotte Lydia Riley (@lottelydia) pointed to *Troublemaker*, Kathleen Burk's 2000 biography of leading British historian AJP Taylor. She praised it as "a richly written life, which cares about things like what he earned and how he wrote, as well as his upbringing and love affairs".

Anna Neima (@Anna_Neima) suggested Maya Jasanoff's 2017 *The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World*, which looks at the life, times and literary inspiration of novelist Joseph Conrad. She rated it as "a great example of how to use biography as a way into a wider history. Compellingly and beautifully written, and not afraid to jump over large patches of its subject's life!" **Ben Griffin** (@history_griffin) gave it real thought, nominating a whole host of titles. But in his words: "Of recent scholarly biographies, Julian Jackson's life of Charles de Gaulle [2018's *A Certain Idea of France*] stands out for its ability to maintain a sense of proportion when shifting between a colossal ego and the events going on around him."

Hussein AH Omar (@chebhocine) highlighted Janet Malcolm's 1994 *The Silent Woman*, which "aside from being a biography of Sylvia Plath's biographers and biographies, is unputdownable". There it is again: the measure of putdownability. Finally, **Joshua Cole** (@joshco61) recommended Michael Holroyd's 1994 biography of 19th and 20th-century English writer and critic Lytton Strachey, citing "sexual radicalism, gossip, Virginia Woolf, JM Keynes. And did I say gossip?" You did, and I'm sold! H

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

THE DAWN WATCH
JOSEPH CONRAD IN A GLOBAL WORLD
MAYA JASANOFF
'Enlightening, compassionate, superb' JOHN LE CARRÉ
The Silent Woman
Sylvia Plath & Ted Hughes
Janet Malcolm
GRANTA
LUCY HUGHES-HALLETT
THE PIKE
GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO
POET, SEDUCER AND PREACHER OF WAR
NEGRO WITH A HAT
THE RISE AND FALL OF MARCUS GARVEY
'SUPERB' SUNDAY TELEGRAPH
COLIN GRANT

Some of the historical biographies praised by Twitter users. Colin Grant's *Negro With a Hat* was commended as "a really insightful journey through anti-colonial history"

Bristol protesters with the statue of Edward Colston. The government wants to give monuments more protection

HERITAGE

New law will protect statues from "mobs"

Statues of historical figures in England are set to be given greater legal protection from being removed or altered, the government has announced.

The new safeguards mean that statues can only be removed in exceptional circumstances, with a policy of "retaining and explaining" for future generations. Any proposed changes will be subject to planning permission, consultation with the local community and, if the governmental body Historic England objects, a final decision at ministerial level. Writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*, the communities secretary Robert Jenrick advocated for a "considered approach" to historical monuments, arguing that "they are hugely varied, some loved, some reviled, many forgotten, but all part of the weft and weave of our uniquely rich history".

The move is the latest development in an ongoing debate about the commemoration of controversial historical figures, both in Britain and around the world. The removal of the statue of slaver Edward Colston in Bristol in June 2020 made international headlines, while the defacing of a statue of Winston Churchill in London's Parliament Square later that month was condemned by prime minister Boris Johnson. Although Jenrick made no direct reference to either episode, he suggested that "town-hall militants and woke worthies" were engaged in a concerted effort to erase Britain's past, and that statues had in the past been removed "on a whim or at the behest of a baying mob". H

GETTY IMAGES

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

London university apologises for role in eugenics movement

A leading UK university has issued a public apology for its historical role in the eugenics movement, which advocated the "improvement" of human genetics via such discredited practices as "selective breeding".

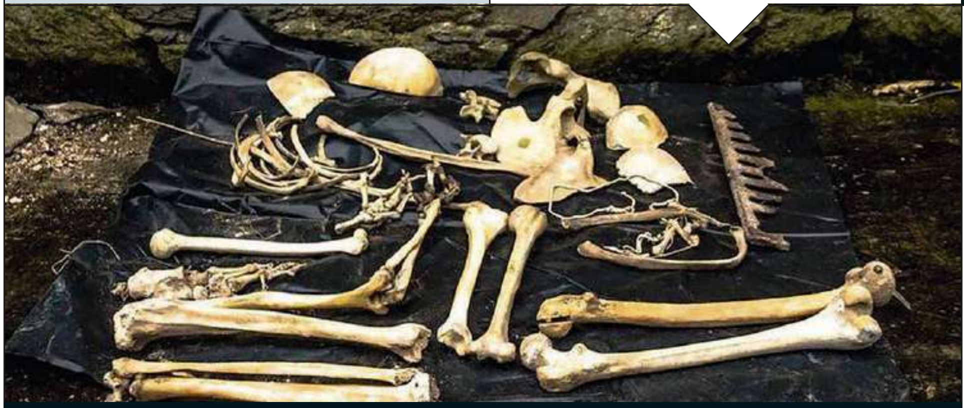
The University College London (UCL) statement acknowledged the institution's "fundamental role in the development, propagation and legitimisation" of eugenics, a history which it said was "in direct contradiction to its founding values of equality, openness and humanity". Key proponents of eugenics who taught at UCL include Karl Pearson and Francis Galton, the latter of whom funded a professorship in the subject at the university. Areas of the UCL campus have been renamed to remove references to both men, and teaching will give "greater prominence" to this history.

The apology is the latest in a series of measures by UCL to engage with its ties to eugenics. An independent inquiry set up in 2018 was criticised by some academics, who argued that it overlooked a series of eugenics conferences run in secret by a UCL honorary lecturer in the past decade.

The main building of University College London, which is engaging with its past ties to eugenics

Dig uncovers mysterious bones

Experts have been left puzzled by the discovery of human bones within the walls of Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire. The remains appear to have been wired together to create an anatomical display and are those of two individuals, but neither set is complete. It's not known when or why the bones were "walled up", although they were uncovered within a chapter house dating from 1860. Abbey authorities intend to put the remains back and set up a memorial to mark the find.



The bones found during work on the chapter house at Mount St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire in early January

Lockdown gardening yields archaeological discoveries

The repeated lockdowns sparked by the coronavirus pandemic are not often seen as welcome news – yet the increase in home gardening that took place throughout 2020 played a key role in a number of archaeological finds. Among the 47,000 such discoveries made in England and Wales announced by the British Museum was a haul of 50 solid gold coins (below), found in Milton Keynes and minted in South Africa during apartheid in the 1970s.

Krugerrand coins were devised in 1967 as a way to promote the private ownership of gold in South Africa

Manchester park excavation reveals Victorian bathhouse

The remains of a Victorian bathhouse, thought to be one of the earliest of its kind, have been uncovered in Manchester. The finds were made during work to create a new park, and they include sections of two large tiled pools and pumps used to heat and distribute the water. The public baths opened in 1857 and became a vital amenity for generations of local people, but they were demolished after being damaged by Second World War bombing. **H**

DEPOT
FIELD

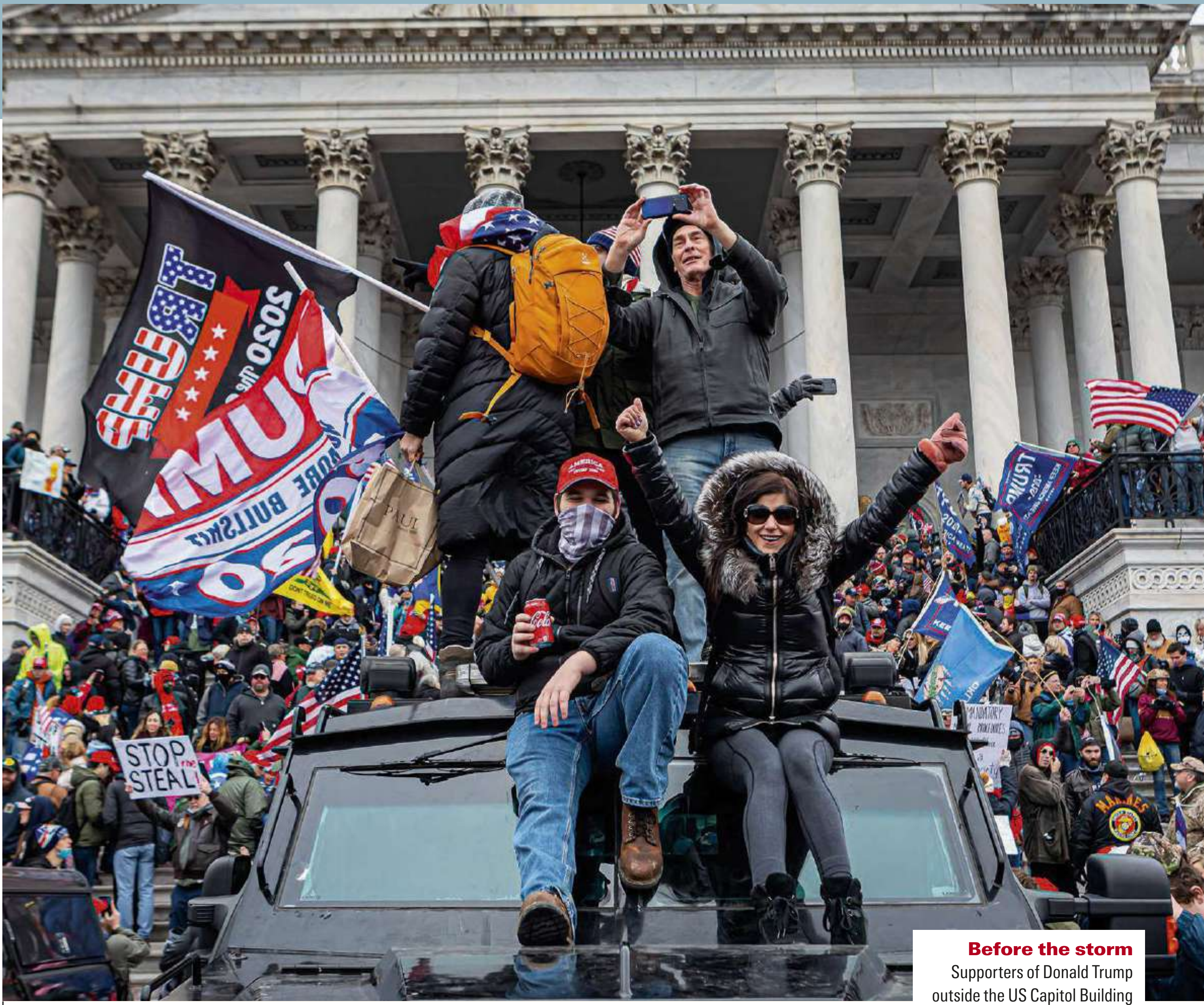
Tiles from the Victorian public baths, uncovered in Manchester, will be used in local regeneration work

National Biography adds Keeler and Snowdon

Christine Keeler, best known for her role in the 1963 Profumo affair that contributed to the fall of Harold Macmillan's government, is among the additions to a major UK record of notable people. Among several other new entries in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography are Antony Armstrong-Jones, 1st Earl of Snowdon and husband of Princess Margaret; former IRA leader turned peacemaker Martin McGuinness; and actor Sir John Hurt.

Christine Keeler, pictured here in 1963, is among the new additions to a weighty UK index of notable figures

ALAMY/TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM/MOUNT ST BERNARD ABBEY/MARK WAUGH

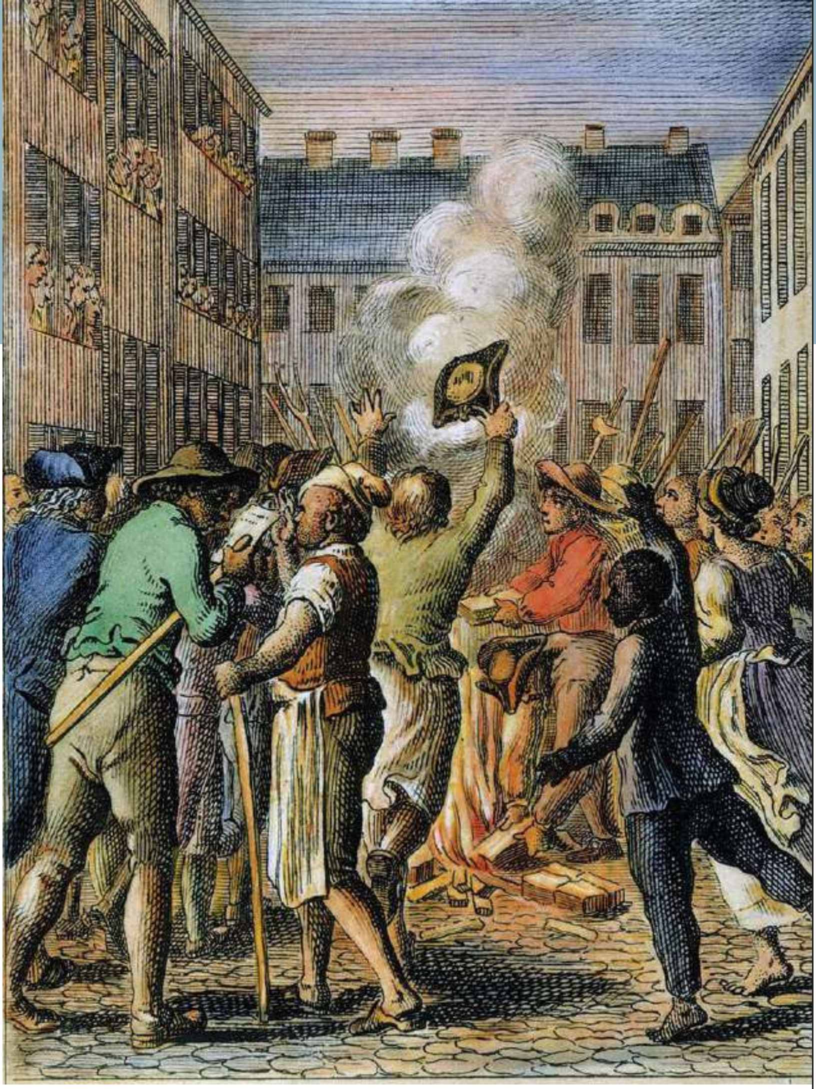


Before the storm Supporters of Donald Trump outside the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, 6 January. The ensuing riot sparked a lockdown of the Capitol and led to the deaths of five people

SHUTTERSTOCK

A new low for US democracy?

"This is not who we are." That was the refrain of many commentators in response to the attack on the US Capitol Building – instigated by supporters of Donald Trump – on 6 January. But was the violence at the nerve centre of American democracy really so unprecedented? We asked three historians to consider the evidence



Fighting the power
A c1780s illustration depicting protests in Boston against British taxation in 1765. The 1760s saw a surge of opposition to colonial rule

> **“The events of 6 January are a reminder Americans cannot be complacent about the imperfect achievements of 1776”**

BENJAMIN L CARP

When extremists violently invaded the US Capitol in January, they chanted “1776”, claiming the mantle of the year when Congress declared American independence.

Revolutionary symbols abound in America’s rightwing circles, from the Gadsden flag depicting a coiled rattlesnake (“Don’t Tread on Me”) to the Tea Party movement of 2009. Calling for a second American Revolution, white supremacists have stockpiled guns and selectively quoted figures including Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. Awash in conspiracy theories and macho fantasies, they imply that today’s federal government is similar to that of the monarchy of British king George III.

Back in 1765, North America witnessed the start of a decade of demonstrations against parliament. Many of those protests centred around the Pennsylvania Assembly: while it met at Philadelphia’s state house, radicals regularly protested against the British empire in the square outside. On 20 May 1776, 4,000 radicals gathered to rail against “the supineness of our government” and establish a new provincial convention to support American independence. The Continental Congress declared independence in July, and the State House is now known as Independence Hall.

The Pennsylvanians who gathered outside the State House protested against a conservative legislature that did not represent the colony’s growing population and kept the public from hearing its debates. And while the crowd may have intimidated the assembly, they didn’t breach the doors to physically attack legislators. They did not pin their hopes on a mendacious demagogue. They strove for greater representation: a government of laws, not men. Their success was imperfect.

In 2021, a crowd of Donald Trump supporters rallied on behalf of an electoral minority, in the name of a man who lost the popular vote twice. For 20 years, the Republican Party’s strength has arisen mainly from unrepresentative structures such as the Electoral College, the Senate and the Supreme Court. The framers of the US Constitution had established these institutions because they feared the excesses of democracy. Today’s rightwingers tried to manipulate these imperfect republican institutions to their ends; when President Trump was defeated, they refused to accept the democratic result.

REAL PATRIOTS
STAND UP FOR THEI
COUNTRY
DONT TREAD ON ME
12

Signs and portents
A man holds up a Gadsden flag at an American Football game in 2017. Symbols from the American Revolution remain popular among some sections of the US population today

The protesters forgot that Jefferson and Paine also hinted at the ideal of equality under the law. Religious minorities, people of colour, women, and many others have used that language to claim broader rights for all. They defeated a slaveholding insurgency in 1865, expanded the franchise, and marched on behalf of civil rights.

The events of 6 January are a reminder that Americans cannot be complacent about the imperfect achievements of 1776 or the racist violence endemic to the American republic. Americans must mobilise on behalf of democracy, lest their enemies mobilise against it.

Benjamin L Carp is associate professor of history at Brooklyn College, and author of *Defiance of the Patriots* (Yale, 2010)

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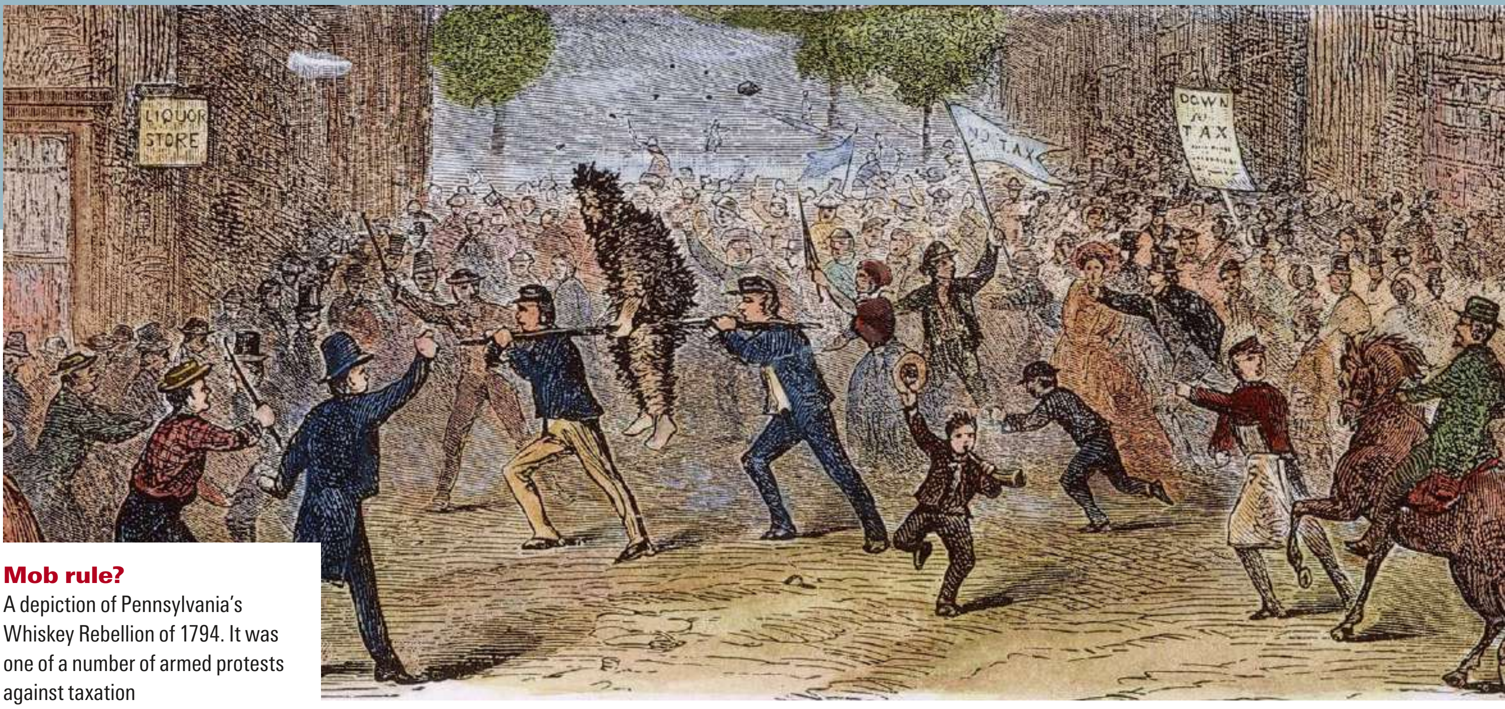


Mob rule?
A depiction of Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. It was one of a number of armed protests against taxation

"There has always been a segment of the US population that has yearned for authoritarianism"

ADAM IP SMITH

Before Donald Trump, no US president has incited a mob in the hope of disrupting the legislature from ratifying his election loss. Yet when a chorus of commentators repeated "this is not who we are" as they watched footage of his supporters storming the US Capitol, their sentiment, while well-intentioned, was misleading.

Putting what happened at the Capitol in context is challenging because it is both shockingly new and depressingly familiar. While unprecedented in its specifics, and shocking in its scale, the Capitol riot is also part of a long American tradition of insurrectionary violence.

That tradition goes back to the revolution itself, the constant touchstone for dissidents throughout US history who have been able to use the example of the so-called "Patriots" to justify their resort to violence. In the 1780s and 90s, there were major armed insurrections in the rural western parts of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania against the imposition of taxes. Wearing their old revolutionary war uniforms, rebels attacked courthouses and symbols of government authority, arguing that it was the only way to get their voices heard.

The Civil War of 1861–65 was a massive insurrection and the culmination of decades of violent tension, including in Congress. In 1856, the anti-slavery senator Charles Sumner was beaten into a coma in the Senate chamber by an irate congressman from South Carolina. (One of the photographs that went viral after the 6 January Capitol riot was of a man carrying a Confederate flag in front of a portrait of Sumner, who must have been spinning in his grave).

After the Civil War was over, white southerners continued their struggle to maintain control in their states. They used violence to prevent black people and their white allies from voting, and sometimes launched successful insurrections. One example was the coup in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898, in which a white militia unseated a multiracial city government and massacred perhaps 300 African-Americans.

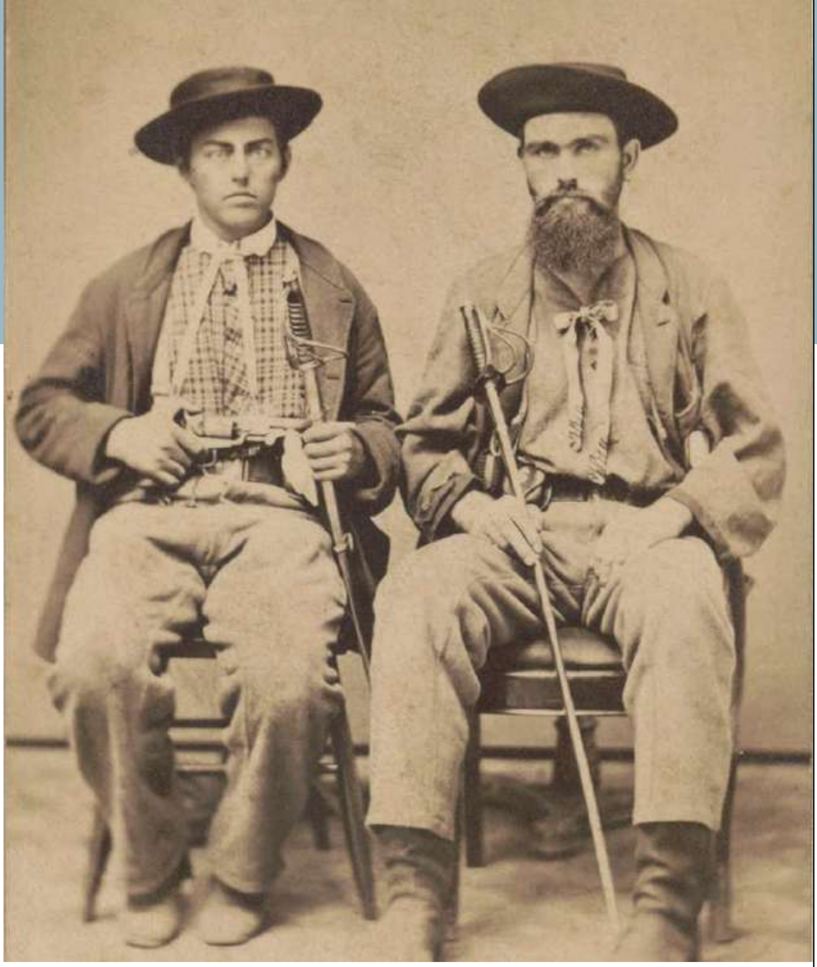
What all these episodes have in common is that they are rooted in a sense of entitlement to rule that has always been the peculiar characteristic of white American men. By 1776, British governance of the colonies was regarded as illegitimate. White North Carolinians thought that if black people voted, the governments they elected were illegitimate. Today, a large portion of the Republican Party believe that President Biden is illegitimate because a conspiracy involving the Democratic Party, the "mainstream media", Venezuelans and the Chinese Communist party "stole" the election.

There has always been a segment of the US population that has rejected the messy pluralism of democracy and yearned for authoritarianism, and there have always been demagogues who have pandered to them. Twentieth-century examples include Huey Long, the Depression-era Louisiana politician; the segregationist George Wallace; and Joe McCarthy, the conspiracy-theorist senator from Wisconsin.

Donald Trump is simply the first of these truth-defying populists to become president, aided by the emergence of social media which has segmented the population into rival camps with their own versions of reality. So while the political violence we're currently seeing is not new, it is more dangerous to the stability of the republic than at any time since the Civil War, and is not likely to disappear any time soon.

Adam IP Smith is the Edward Orsborn professor of US politics and political history at the University of Oxford

SHUTTERSTOCK



Sinister forces
Two members of the "Border Ruffians", a 19th-century pro-slavery organisation that used violence and political interference to achieve its aims

> " Violent mob action to disrupt democratic governance is closely associated with slavery and its long afterlives "

MANISHA SINHA

The violent assault on the Capitol by assorted groups of white supremacists and domestic terrorists was a jarring spectacle for the United States and the world to behold. For many American citizens, grown accustomed to the peaceful transfer of power, this was a shock – though perhaps they should have expected it given the disastrous track record of the Trump regime.

The violence unleashed by the "Unite the Right" march of neo-Nazis and neo-Confederates on Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 was simply a preview. Early in 2020, an armed mob stormed the Michigan state capitol; some made elaborate plans to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer, which were luckily foiled by the FBI. In doing so, they were simply the latest in a long line of mobs employing violence to contest democracy.

The American republic was founded on revolutionary ideals of universal natural rights, as well as the enslavement of African-Americans and the violent dispossession of Native Americans. Contestation over American democracy is as old as the republic itself. But violent mob action to disrupt democratic governance is closely associated with slavery and its long afterlives. According to historian David Grimsted's comprehensive study of American mobbing before the Civil War, violent mobs were far more common in what historian John Hope Franklin termed "the militant south". In the north, too, such groups assaulted abolitionists and African-Americans. In the 1850s, proslavery "Border Ruffians" from Missouri stole elections in Kansas territory in order to force Kansas to become a slave state.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/GETTY IMAGES

A history of violence
Ku Klux Klan medals. "The disruption of democratic governance through violent terror has a long history in the US," says Manisha Sinha

The invasion of the Capitol also resembles 1861's slaveholders' rebellion. The deep south states left the Union to form the Confederacy because they could not abide by the election of an antislavery president, Abraham Lincoln.

The disruption of democratic governance through violent terror has a long and sorry history in the United States. Reconstruction, the attempt to establish an interracial democracy in the United States after the Civil War, was overthrown systematically by racial terror. White terror groups in the postwar south, such as the Ku Klux Klan (founded in 1866), intimidated voters and murdered reconstruction politicians. They targeted democratic processes, killing members of conventions and legislatures.

During the Civil Rights movement, these white supremacist groups again gathered steam and targeted ordinary African-Americans, as well as leaders of the movement, for assassination. In the post-civil rights era, when the United States became an interracial democracy, they have continued to exist as an unregenerate racist minority. In recent years, partly as a reaction to the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008 – and encouraged by Donald Trump – they have become dangerous. They are acting on the old secessionist principle of attempting to destroy the republic rather than accept the results of a lawful, fair election. H

Manisha Sinha is the James L and Shirley A Draper chair in American history at the University of Connecticut, and author of books including *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (Yale University Press, 2016)

MICHAEL WOOD ON...

THE DAWN OF GLOBAL HISTORY WRITING

"Sitting among the discards of old books, I felt a flood of emotion"

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series and his latest book is *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

It's time for a book clear out. I've been avoiding this moment for some years, but (and I'm sure many readers feel the same) our house is sagging under a lifetime's accumulation of history books, especially from second-hand bookshops. Arlington and Lewisohn's *In Search of Old Peking* (10p from a stall in Bath); *Letters of Lupus of Ferrières* (9 francs from a bouquiniste on the Quai Voltaire in Paris). The latter inspired me to write a book about his friendship with Einhard, which is still in my drawer. There's even a tiny battered Gertrude Bell from Baghdad's open-air book street, still with a Farida beer-label bookmark. Stories, experiences, memories. But will I ever read them again? Be ruthless, I told myself.

So I've started using the lockdown to go through the boxes. Should Samuel Eliot Morison's *Great Explorers* go, riveting as it is? Or Tawney's *Documents*? Or those odd volumes of Toynbee's *Study of History* – back in favour again? Then I picked up Fernand Braudel's *Mediterranean*. Sitting on the floor among the discards, I felt a flood of emotion. It was like greeting an old friend.

Teaching in Algeria in the 1920s, young Braudel did a doctoral thesis on Philip II of Spain's foreign policy. He also became fascinated by the Mediterranean, by "its creative space, the amazing freedom of its sea-routes, its many regions so different yet so alike". In the thirties he taught in Brazil, further widening his horizons while he gathered materials for the big book. But as all writers of history have discovered, the more he thought about it, the more factors seemed to come into play: climate, environment, landscape, social history.

When war broke out in 1939 Braudel was called up, and the following year he was captured during the German attack on France and became a PoW – first at Mainz and then at Lübeck, where he wrote the entire first draft of the book from memory. (He had no notes, but he had access to a library at both camps.) His book was published in 1949 and a revised edition in 1966. By the time it was finished, the events that he'd originally set out to explore were only a small part of the book. Most of it was about the human cultures and civilisations that were their context. But those civilisations in their turn, he thought, had to be seen within the "longue durée" (long term) – reaching over time from prehistory to the present. In that light, mere events, like the wars that led to the battle of Lepanto, were superficial, "flickering, like fireflies on the surface of history". Even civilisations, although often very long-lasting, depend on much deeper realities of geography, landscape and climate.

Braudel's book would be the real beginning of global history writing – the study of world systems, including histories of oceans and seas, which is so important today. The final title of his book is *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, and, along with his other writings, it features granular descriptions derived from an unbelievable range of documents on the lives of ordinary people. Most surviving sources in history come from the wealthy, the literate and the powerful, but he wrote about the lives of slaves, serfs, peasants and the urban poor – the people who generate the wealth of societies and civilisations. He went on to explore these themes in detail in his great trilogy, *Civilisation and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*.

At the end of volume two of the *Mediterranean*, Braudel wrote an afterword which, as a statement of the sympathetic imagination that lies behind the historian's craft, has stayed with me all my life. Looking back, I believe it's played a big part in how I think about doing history on TV: bringing in landscape, climate, geography and the lives of ordinary people as well as the rulers – in Braudel's case, the "timeless realities… the deep bone structure of the Mediterranean". He thought this needed to be approached with the eye of the geographer, or the traveller, or the novelist.

Quoting the travel writer Lawrence Durrell, he wrote: "I believe that antiquity lives on round today's Mediterranean shores. In Rhodes or Cyprus, 'Ulysses can only be ratified as an historical figure with the help of the fishermen who today sit in the smoky tavern of The Dragon, playing cards and waiting for the winds to change'."

With the huge changes caused by cultural and economic globalisation in the last 50 years, I don't know whether that's still true. But as you will imagine, Braudel went in to the "save" box. More adventures there, I hope! H

ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Working together today to save lives tomorrow

For Cancer Research UK scientists such as Jacqui, every day she heads into work brings us one step closer to a world in which everyone survives cancer. She leads a team of researchers working in the field of 'liquid biopsies', developing new technologies that make cancer treatments kinder and less invasive – and ultimately save lives.

Liquid biopsies are simple blood tests that detect and monitor the progress of common cancers. Catching cancer early is key to ensuring a patient has the best chance to beat the disease. In patients with a history of breast cancer, Jacqui's blood tests are able to detect the recurrence of cancer up to two years ahead of more traditional screening methods.

Down the line, Jacqui is hopeful that this new technology will deliver a "step change in cancer survival", resulting in more personalised cancer treatment plans for patients. "We hope that this type of technology will be implemented in the NHS in the future to help with routine care," she says. "It's about living with cancer and not dying from it, so that cancer largely becomes a manageable disease that you are able to monitor and live with."

This life-saving research is transforming our understanding of cancer and how it might be treated in the future. But Jacqui needs all the help she can get to ensure that her team can continue to make the progress that will one day beat the disease.

One third of Cancer Research UK's funding comes from people who leave a gift in their Will. This money is a vital part of the fight against cancer; without it, explains Jacqui, her life-saving research couldn't progress. "The funding is critical to what we do," she says. "It has allowed me to develop and maintain an experienced team of scientists – as well as form strong relationships and collaborations with other centres – to drive our research forward."

An ongoing mission

Cancer Research UK funds nearly half of all publicly funded cancer research here in the UK. The truth is, COVID-19 has slowed progress. Fundraising has fallen, and right now, future research is at risk. But this research saves lives and Cancer Research UK will never stop. To save lives tomorrow, Cancer Research UK needs your help today.

There are many different types of gifts you can leave in your Will, such as a specific amount or item, but a residuary gift is likely to be the most valuable way to give to charity. A residuary gift is a share or percentage of your estate, and it is inflation-proof so will never lose value.

The hard fact is that one in two people born after 1960 will get cancer in their lifetime. Cancer Research UK's pioneering research has helped save millions of lives so far, and the charity wants to see three in four people surviving their cancer for 10 years or more by 2034. But it needs your help to do so. Pledge now to help beat cancer for future generations by leaving a gift in your Will to Cancer Research UK.

Together, with your pledge and that of Cancer Research UK, we can create a world where everyone survives cancer.

CANCER
RESEARCH
UK

Together we will beat cancer

Registered with
FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

To find out more, request a free Gifts in Wills Guide.
Visit cruk.org/willsguide or call 0800 077 6644

Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), and the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247).

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in March in history

1 MARCH 86 BC

Sulla brings a nightmare to Athens

The ruthless Roman general ravages the Greek city

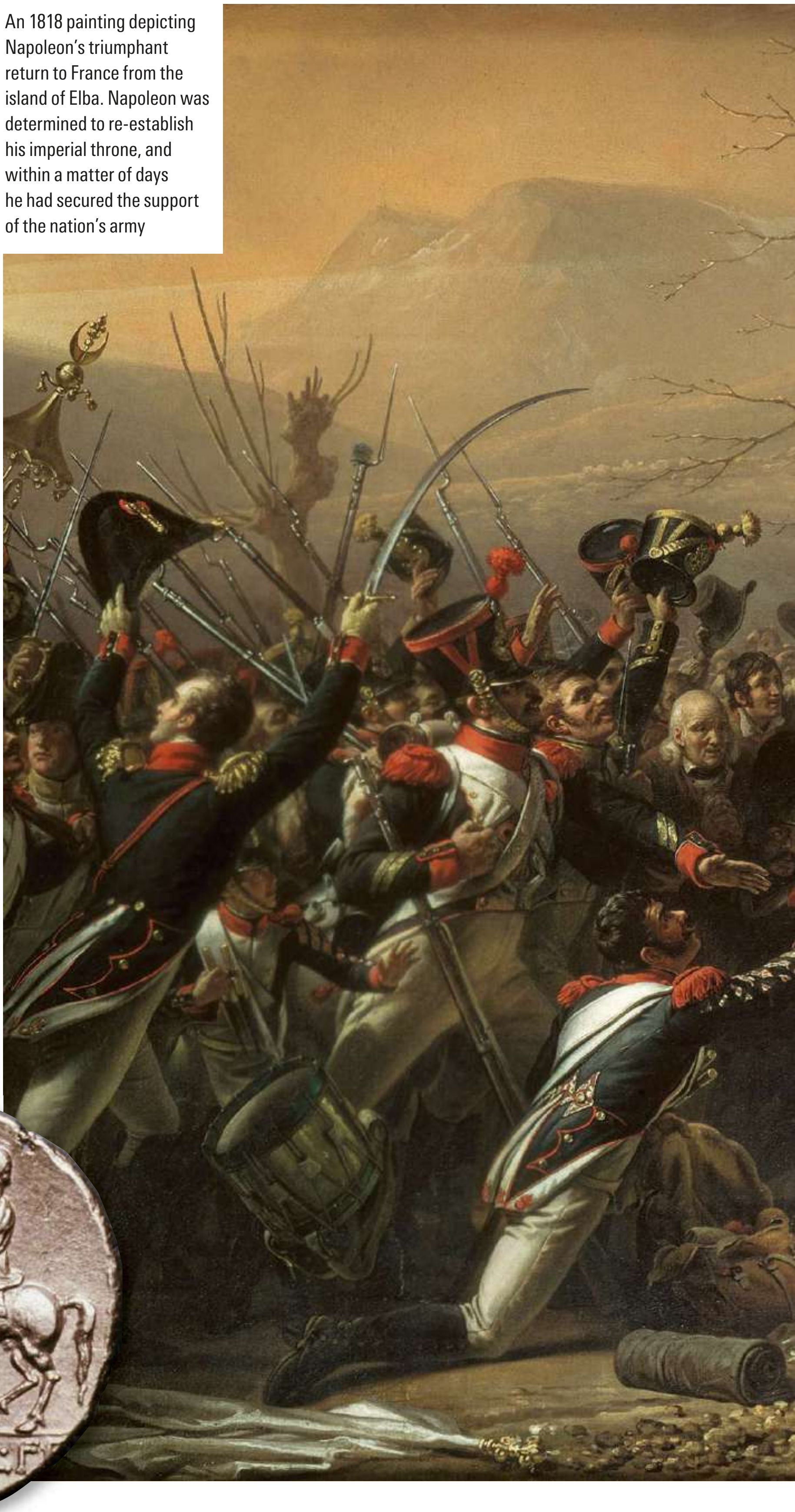
Of all the great characters in Roman history, Lucius Cornelius Sulla ranks as one of the most ruthless. A brilliant general and cunning politician, he rose to fame in his campaigns against Rome's enemies abroad. And in the spring of 87 BC he arrived in Greece, in preparation to take on one of the most formidable: Mithridates, king of Pontus.

Sulla's first target was the Greek city of Athens, run by Mithridates' ally Aristion. Though a shadow of its former self, it was still a tough nut to crack. Needing wood for his siege engines, Sulla cut down the sacred groves and raided the local temples. Week by week, he tightened his grip. And at last, at midnight on 1 March 86 BC, the Romans broke through the walls and poured into the city.

For the Athenians, what followed was a nightmare of horrific proportions. "The arrival of Sulla," wrote the biographer Plutarch, "was made terrible by the blasts of trumpets and bugles, and by the cries and yells of the soldiers whom he let loose for plunder and slaughter, who rushed through the narrow streets with drawn swords. It was impossible to count all the slain; to this day people calculate the total using the space that was covered with blood."

But the most revealing thing, wrote Plutarch, were the Athenians who "slew themselves out of yearning pity for their native city, which they thought was going to be destroyed". Even the best of them lost the will to live: they realised "they could expect no humanity or moderation from Sulla".

A gold coin from 80 BC showing the Roman general Sulla. Many Athenians killed themselves when he invaded their city



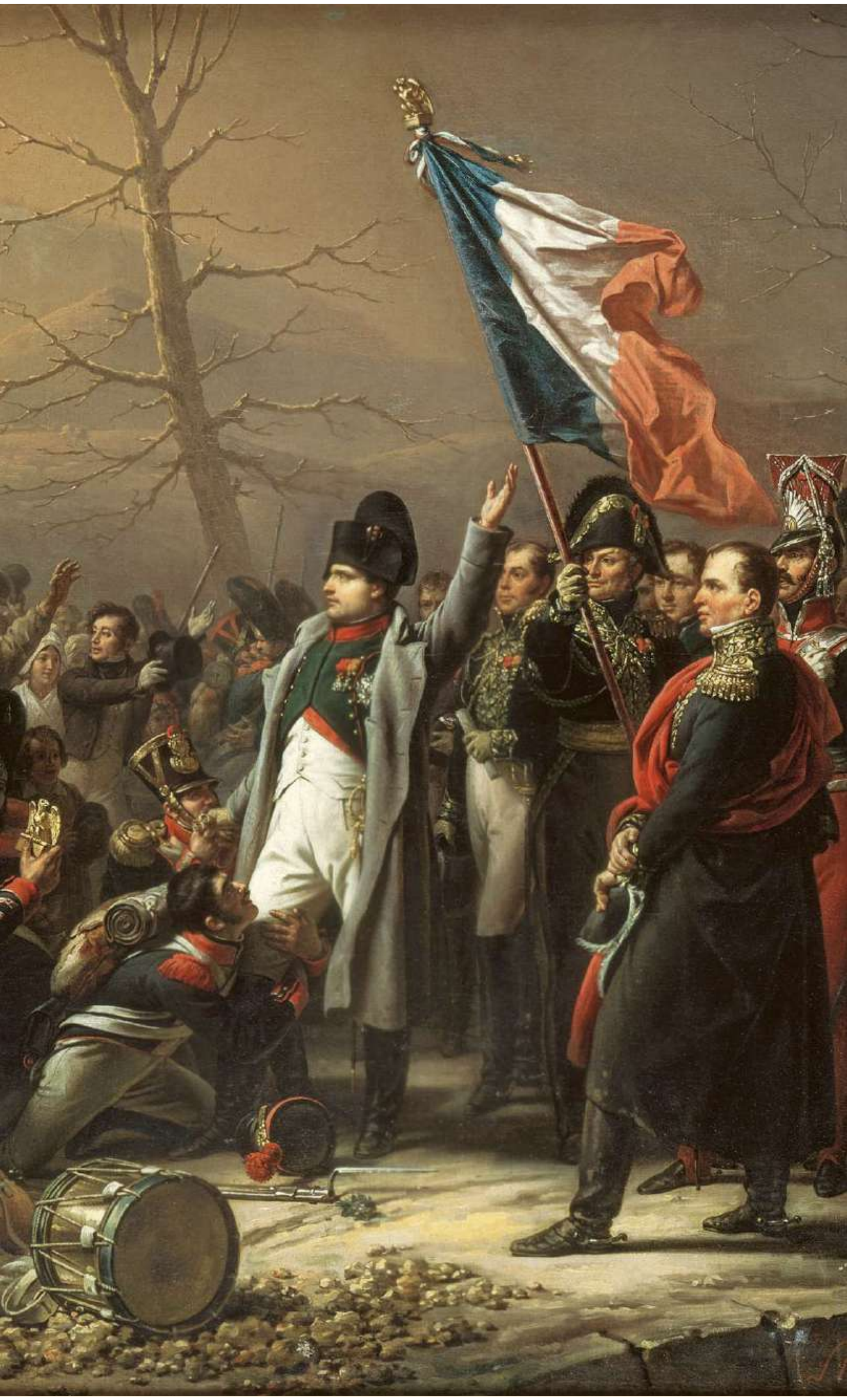
An 1818 painting depicting Napoleon's triumphant return to France from the island of Elba. Napoleon was determined to re-establish his imperial throne, and within a matter of days he had secured the support of the nation's army

ALAMY/AKG-IMAGES

Fort Saint Elmo in Valletta, today the capital of Malta. The city is named after Jean de Vallette

28 MARCH 1566

Having seen off a long Ottoman siege, the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, Jean de Vallette, decides that **Malta needs a new city**. On the slopes of Mount Sciberras he lays the foundation stone for his new settlement, which is eventually named, in his honour, Valletta.



1 MARCH 1815

Napoleon boldly returns to France

The military leader lands on French soil to retake power

By the last week in February 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte had been in exile on the Mediterranean island of Elba for more than nine months. Europe was at peace, and the campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars were a fading memory. Yet in Vienna, where the major powers were redrawing the bloodstained map of Europe, tempers were fraying. In France, too, under the Bourbon monarch Louis XVIII, there were already hints of unrest at the restoration of the old order. But surely nothing could go seriously wrong – could it?

And then, on 1 March, something extraordinary happened on the south coast of France. Napoleon – who had escaped from Elba on the brig *Inconstant* – landed in the seaside village of Golfe-Juan, between Cannes and Antibes, with a thousand men. He issued a defiant proclamation, asserting his right to rule.

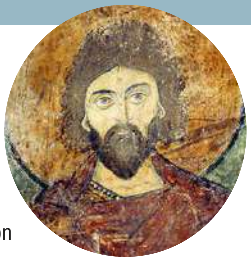
"Frenchmen!" he declared. "In my exile I have heard your complaints and your desires: you were claiming that government of your choice, which alone is legitimate. You were complaining of my long sleep, you reproached me with sacrificing to my own repose the great interests of the fatherland… I have crossed the seas in the midst of perils of every sort; I arrive among you in order to reclaim my rights, which are yours."

It seemed the stuff of a novel, the stuff of fantasy. But it was real. The Bourbons sent troops south, but Napoleon seemed unstoppable. First Antibes fell, then Cannes. On 7 March, in the village of Laffrey, the army at last caught up with him.

"Soldiers, do you recognise me?" Napoleon cried. "If there is one among you who wishes to kill your emperor, here I am!"

After a long silence, one musket clattered to the ground, then another, then another. First one soldier was shouting: "Vive l'Empereur!" – then they were all shouting it.

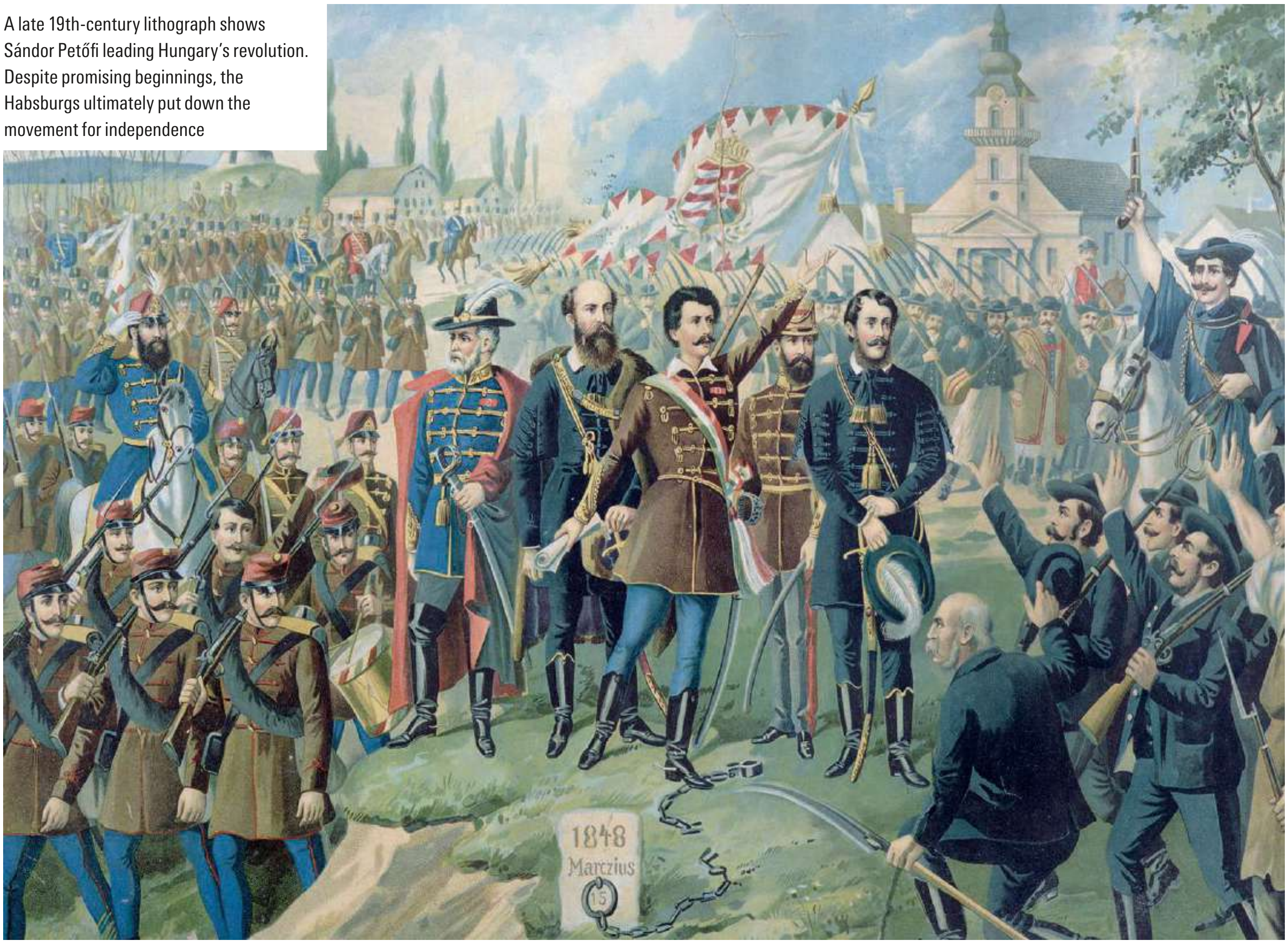
Napoleon smiled. "It's over," he said. "In eight days, we shall be in Paris."



Saint Adrian (right) converted from worshipping the Roman gods to Christianity, resulting in his execution

4 MARCH AD 306

While torturing some Christians in Nicomedia, a Roman officer, Adrian, asks them what they hope to get out of it. He is so impressed by their answers that he promptly **converts to Christianity**, earning a date with the executioner. The good news is that he becomes a saint.



A late 19th-century lithograph shows Sándor Petőfi leading Hungary's revolution. Despite promising beginnings, the Habsburgs ultimately put down the movement for independence

15 MARCH 1848

Revolution ignites Hungary

A mob marches on the governor to demand change

Like all good revolutions, the Hungarian uprising of 1848 began in a coffeehouse. The place's name was Pilvax, and it looked exactly as a Pest cafe should: pillars, arches, newspapers, men smoking in the corners. And it was here, on 15 March, that Sándor Petőfi and his fellow radicals gathered, wearing red-white-and-green ribbons on their lapels, to mark their support for Hungarian freedom.

For Petőfi, a 25-year-old poet, Hungary had chafed for too long under the rule of the remote Habsburg emperor. The radical had co-written a list of 12 demands, including a devolved Hungarian government, a free press, a national bank and a national army. In a nod to the French Revolution 60 years earlier, the document ended with the powerful words: "Equality, liberty, brotherhood!"

As the young revolutionaries left the cafe, they carried copies of these Twelve Points. Ranging across the city, they forced printers to run off more copies, so they could read them to the crowds. Soon hundreds of people were joining them, then thousands. At last they reached the newly built National Museum, and here Petőfi seized his moment.

Before a giant crowd, he began to recite his most recent poem, *National Song*:

"On your feet, Magyar, the homeland calls!
The time is here, now or never!
Shall we be slaves or free?
This is the question, choose your answer!
By the God of the Hungarians
We vow,
We vow, that we will be slaves
No longer!"

Needless to say, the crowd loved it.

A little later, the huge throng surged across the Danube via a pontoon bridge to Buda, then a separate city. Here they gathered outside the Habsburg governor's office, demanding that he acquiesce to the demands. The governor was no fool; he said yes. More good news followed two days later, as the emperor agreed that Hungary could have its own government.

So far, not a single drop of blood had been spilled. It didn't last.

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Margaret Thatcher and her husband, Denis, are all smiles after the 1979 general election has been called

28 MARCH 1979

Labour receives a vote of no confidence

Margaret Thatcher's attempt to trigger an election succeeds by a hair's breadth

Ten o'clock in the House of Commons, and never had the atmosphere been more tense. After three tough years, Jim Callaghan's Labour government was facing a vote of no confidence, brought by his Tory opponent, Margaret Thatcher. If he lost, it would mean a general election – and almost certainly a Thatcher premiership.

The lobbies thronged with people, the air thick with rumours. Callaghan thought "the wait seemed never-ending". At last he saw the first of the government whips, Jimmy Hamilton, emerging from the crush of MPs.

As Hamilton reached the clerk's table he gave "an almost imperceptible thumbs up". On the other side, a Tory whip was whispering to Mrs Thatcher, and her face paled. "I don't believe it," she mouthed, and a gasp of triumph came from the Labour benches. Had they pulled it off, against all the odds?

Then the clerk of the house handed the voting slip to the Conservative teller, Spencer Le Marchant, and the mood changed. Suddenly the government benches were deathly silent, and all the noise was coming from the opposition. "Order, order!" said the speaker, and the house fell absolutely still.

"The Ayes to the right, 311," Le Marchant said. "The Noes to the left, 310." Even before he had finished, there came from the Tory benches a roar of unbridled joy. They had done it. Now the election was on. H

Dominic Sandbrook co-presents the weekly podcast *The Rest Is History* with historian Tom Holland, available on all platforms

GETTY IMAGES

The **Kronstadt mutiny** is brutally crushed by Red Army troops

BY **EVAN MAWDSLEY**

One hundred years ago, on 17–18 March 1921, Red Army troops crossed the frozen Gulf of Finland to crush the Kronstadt mutiny – the Russian Revolution's last major event. Pitched battles ensued in which thousands died, ending in the mutineers' bloody defeat and a wave of mass executions.

When the mutiny broke out, Russia was in a dire position. The country had reeled through four years of revolution and civil war. Forced grain requisitioning had alienated the peasants. Food shortages roused mass demonstrations in cities. On 1 March 1921, a group of sailors and citizens from Kronstadt (a fortified naval base on Kotlin Island, founded to defend the nearby city of St Petersburg) passed a resolution blaming the communist monopoly of power. Re-election of all local governing councils (soviets) was demanded, as well as freedom of expression for workers and peasants and the dismantling of the communist control system. In response, Lenin and Trotsky blamed former officers, condemned a "new White-Guard plot" and ordered an armed response.

> " The mutiny triggered a momentous 'carrot and stick' response from the Kremlin "

The mutiny and its violent suppression triggered a momentous "carrot and stick" response. Economic concessions were made to the peasants and artisans in the form of the New Economic Policy; grain requisitioning ended and private trade was permitted – for a time. Meanwhile, the Communist Party's structure was further centralised, and opposition factions, even within the party, were banned; these developments paved the way for Stalin's rise.

A Red Army artillery battalion suppressing the Kronstadt mutiny, 1921. The uprising was the last key event of the Russian Revolution

Four years before the mutiny, the Kronstadt sailors had been a leading revolutionary force. After the fall of the tsar they had resisted the authority of the "bourgeois" Provisional Government throughout 1917 and sent armed detachments to Petrograd (formerly St Petersburg) to support Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution. As a result, the use of brute force to crush "Red Kronstadt" in 1921 carried great symbolic importance: the revolution had "devoured its children".

Outside Russia, opponents of the communist government, on the left and the right, attacked its actions. Decades later, *The God that Failed*, an influential 1949 collection of essays by lapsed communists, made Kronstadt part of Cold War rhetoric. In his essay, the American journalist and historian Louis Fischer applied "Kronstadt" to any action, like Stalin's purges or the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact, which shook outsiders' support for the USSR. Later "Kronstadts" would be the invasions of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968. H

Evan Mawdsley is an honorary professional research fellow at the University of Glasgow

LETTERS

A 14th-century depiction of Henry II. Reader John Malden recalls a financial link to the king's role in Thomas Becket's death

LETTER OF THE MONTH

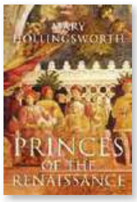
A royal sum

How Thomas Becket Rose from the Dead (January) gives interesting details of the aftermath of the saint's murder in Canterbury Cathedral, and notes that, on 21 May 1172, Henry II admitted he was to blame and that part of his penance would include donations in Becket's name.

Just before decimalisation, in 1971, one of my colleagues was examining the Canterbury Cathedral accounts when an entry caught his eye. The amount in question, received from the treasury, had no explanation, and was for £2 13s & 4d. Any entry ending in 13s & 4d or 6s & 8d relates to a medieval entry – these being either a mark or half mark, a unit of account which after the Norman conquest was worth 13 shillings and 4 pence, or two thirds of a pound sterling.

Tracing this entry back through the cathedral's accounts, it became clear that this sum, possibly still being received post-decimalisation, was the financial reparation paid by Henry II continuing into modern times.

John Malden, Scottish Borders



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Princes of the Renaissance** by Mary Hollingsworth. You can read our review of the book on page 82

The greatest generation?

In January's *Letters*, Marek Pruszewicz refers to Britain as having an "obsession" with the Second World War, and implies that the British have a deep national conviction that Britain has always been a "good" country. I think he is entirely wrong in this, and that he confuses obsession with a deep admiration and a profound gratitude for the achievements of that generation, which fought and lived through the most devastating war in history, allowing us now to live in this country as free people.

Pruszewicz finds himself amazed that part of Churchill's funeral was re-enacted to mark its 50th anniversary and that no British person he spoke to found it odd that it was done. No wonder it was done. Churchill led his country and its people with every fibre of his being to bring about the eventual defeat of the most evil regime the world has ever seen. But it wasn't only Churchill: it was ordinary people, too, from servicemen to the housewife standing in the street trying to salvage a few belongings from the pile of rubble which, an hour previously, had been her family home.

Regarding the supposed British conviction of always having been a "good" country, we can surely allow ourselves to look back at the period of the Second World War and say to ourselves that then we really were good!

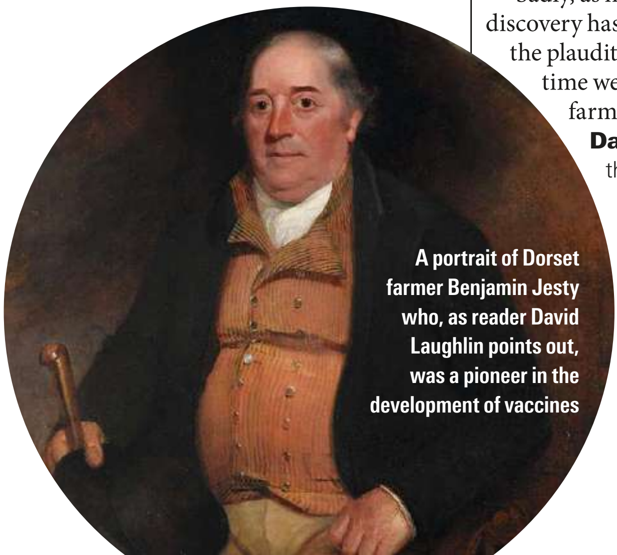
Derek Chandler, Modbury

First doses

I enjoyed Gareth Williams' timely article on vaccines (*Miracle Cures*, January) but was sad to see Edward Jenner once again being given sole credit for developing the smallpox vaccine. Many would argue that the honour should, at the very least, be shared with a Dorset farmer named Benjamin Jesty – who successfully inoculated his family using cowpox pustules a full 22 years before Jenner.

Sadly, as he was not an "academic", his discovery has gone largely unreported and the plaudits have gone to Jenner. Surely it's time we gave credit to this "ordinary" farmer for his remarkable discovery?

David Laughlin, Bourton-on-the-Water



A portrait of Dorset farmer Benjamin Jesty who, as reader David Laughlin points out, was a pioneer in the development of vaccines

Gareth Williams replies:

David Laughlin is quite right to point out that Benjamin Jesty inoculated his wife and sons with cowpox, long before Jenner's experiments. Jesty also confirmed they were protected against smallpox – by deliberately exposing his sons to smallpox. The experiments were not publicised at the time; Jesty's wife nearly lost her arm when the vaccination site became infected, and local anger at this "bestial" practice made the whole family move to another part of Dorset.

You can read more about the story in Patrick Pead's *Benjamin Jesty, the Grandfather of Vaccination* (Timefile, 2016) and my own *Angel of Death: The Story of Smallpox* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Jesty's grave in Worth Matravers on the Isle of Purbeck is worth a visit. His epitaph, written by his wife in 1816, refers to "An upright honest Man… the first person [known] that introduced the Cowpox by inoculation… in the Year 1774."

Enemies in high places

I disagree with Eleanor Levy's suggestion (*Letters*, February) that Richard III was the only person who stood to gain from his nephews' disappearance.

The act of "Titulus Regius" was passed through parliament in 1484, confirming the illegitimacy of the two boys. As bastards, they were no threat whatsoever to Richard and so there would be no point in his disposing of them. However, in the following reign, Henry VII wanted to marry the princes' sister, which he would not want to do if she was illegitimate, so he had to reverse the act.

Two legitimate princes were a huge threat to Henry's somewhat shaky claim to the throne. We do not know what happened to the princes, or even if they were murdered at all. But, if someone wanted them out of the way, there was more than one candidate.

Wendy Ahl, West Sussex

A decade of hope

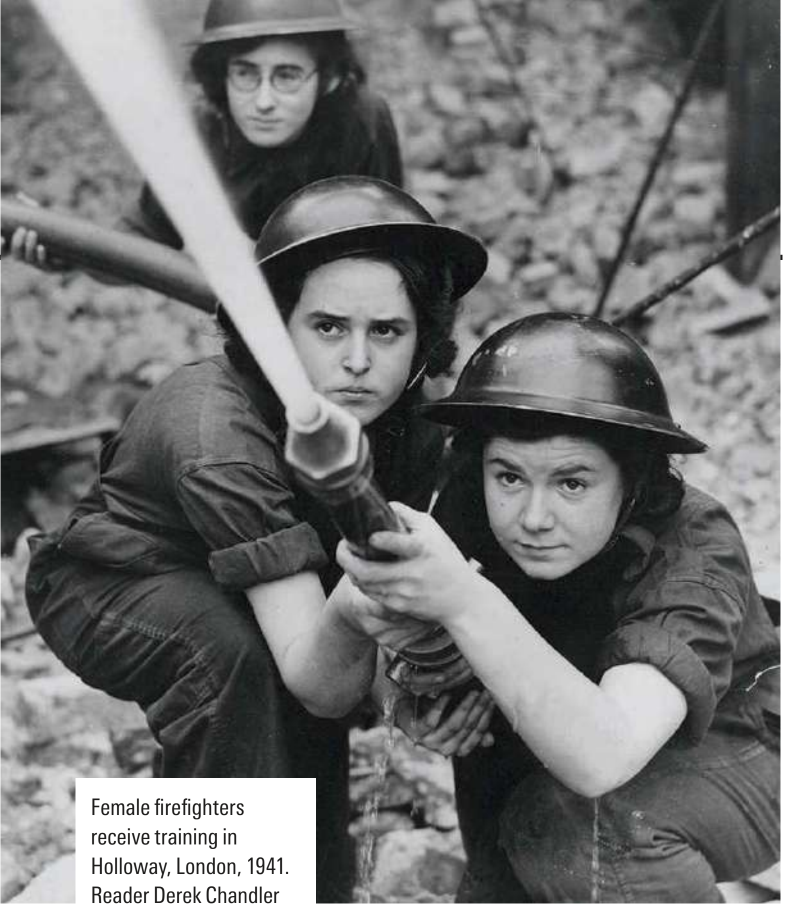
As someone who grew up in the 1960s, I enjoyed your recent podcast interview with Dominic Sandbrook on Britain in that decade (17 January) – but found it strange to hear my life described in historical terms.

A few minor points. Food was definitely a rotation of dishes starting with Sunday roast, followed on Monday by cottage pie made with leftover meat from the Sunday joint, and then fish on a Friday. People were starting to experiment a little with spag bol. I agree that Vesta meals were a thing, but Angel Delight puddings were also popular.

If you asked me about a "Sixties smell", it would be Brut and Old Spice. From what I recall, women wore deodorant but men didn't.

Sandbrook said he wouldn't like to have lived through the 1960s. My peers and I often

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN



Female firefighters receive training in Holloway, London, 1941. Reader Derek Chandler highlights the bravery of a generation of British people during the Second World War

say we feel so privileged to have grown up when we did, because there was nothing but hope for the future – and now there is none.
Louise Lawton, Hove

Corrections

- In January's crossword, the clue for 5 across implied that **Anselm was archbishop of Canterbury** under William the Conqueror. However, as reader Damian Galloway has pointed out, he actually held this position under William II and Henry I.

- A few readers have emailed in about the date of **Ivan the Terrible's crowning** in January's *Anniversaries*. This took place in 1547 rather than 1647, as was printed in the magazine.

- In the Author's Note of January's *Amazing Lives* piece on **August Agboola Browne** we described the research of "an academic at the City University of New York", which added a new dimension to Browne's story. We should have named that academic, who is Dr Nicholas Boston, associate professor of media sociology at the City University of New York, Lehman College. His article on Browne is available on the BBC website at *bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-54337607*

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HOW THE WEST

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Learning the hard way
Soldiers struggle to move a field gun through the Flanders mud. The key to victory in the west was the Allies' ability to effect one of the "most consequential technological and tactical transformations in the history of war", says Nick Lloyd

WAS WON

The western front has long been synonymous with futility and deadlock. Yet, argues **Nick Lloyd**, the great battles of 1914–18 triggered a period of enormous innovation – one that ultimately ushered in a new age of warfare

The western front occupies a fixed and unchanging position in our memory of the First World War. It is synonymous with trenches and bloody, futile combat; a place of barbed wire and poison gas, of massed artillery batteries and machine-guns, mud and blood. It was where the armies of Germany and France, the United Kingdom and America (alongside a host of minor powers and colonial possessions) placed the bulk of their military strength and where they suffered the majority of their casualties. This arena of combat left a legacy of commemoration and remembrance that continues to influence our attitudes to the war to this day.

That the western front was the most important theatre in the First World War is surely beyond doubt. Allied victory in France and Belgium ensured that Germany could not win the war (despite defeating Russia on the eastern front and Serbia in the Balkans) and that the British, French and Americans would go on to shape the postwar settlement at Versailles.

But what *is* up for debate is the western front's reputation for stalemate and futility. I would argue that, far from being a stale and unchanging arena devoid of strategy or innovation, the battles fought in France and Belgium witnessed an astonishing degree of change and development – on both the German and Allied sides. The western front was a cauldron of war in which modern warfare was forged.

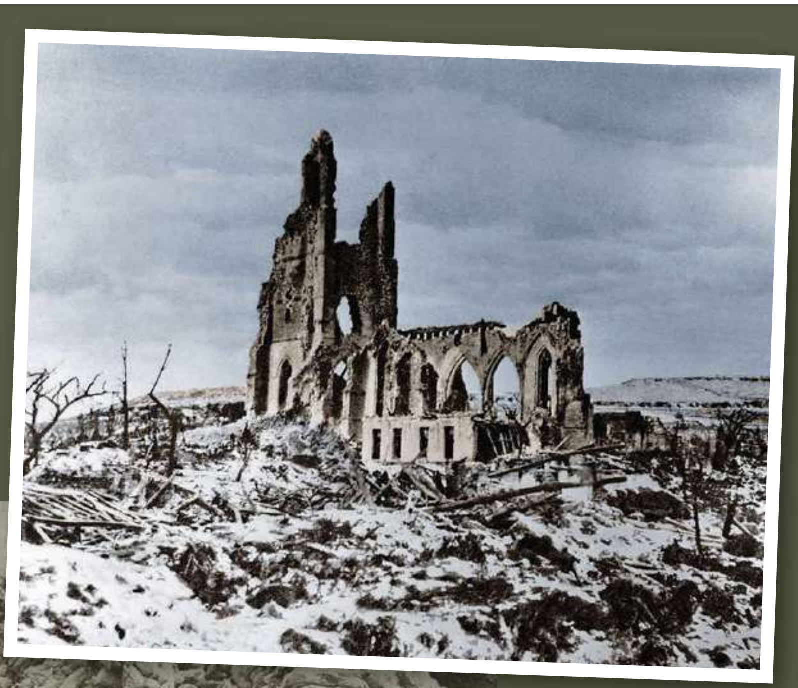
Going to ground

The central problem on the western front between 1914 and 1918 was the relationship between firepower and space. The armies of 1914 possessed weapons of enormous power: quick-firing artillery, modern magazine-fed rifles, and machine-guns, but only limited ability to move quickly when they left their railheads. Although manoeuvre was possible, once armies were engaged in combat, infantry rapidly went to ground and began digging trenches or foxholes to escape the lethal fire-swept zone between the two forces. This created a major problem for commanders who needed to move onto the offensive to win the war.

By the end of 1914, commanders of both sides were convinced that trench warfare could be shaken off, but they underestimated just what it would take to do so. The French Army attacked throughout the winter of 1914 and the spring of 1915, pushing forward in a vain attempt to snap the German line in two.

It was in Champagne (north-eastern France) where the basic tactical methods of the next three years were hammered out. Attacking infantry would firstly attempt to close with enemy positions by digging saps before a furious artillery bombardment was fired. The preliminary bombardment would increase into what the Germans called *trommelfeuer* ("drum fire") before the infantry went "over the top". But too often the artillery did not do its job, either because it

German troops (left) on the move, and (below) sandbags used in the construction of a British trench near Fricourt. The combatants' firepower forced their infantry to ground



The ruined Church of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire. It was during the French Champagne offensive in 1915 that the tactical template of the following three years was established

BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES

was not heavy enough (a lack of howitzers combined with the fact that high-explosive shells were still not available in large numbers), or that it was inaccurate, leaving the infantry exposed to a hail of rifle and machine-gun fire once they left their trenches.

Some hoped to avoid this problem by utilising novel weapons (the German army deployed poison gas at Langemarck near Ypres in April 1915), or by avoiding the western front entirely (such as the attempt to knock the Ottoman empire out of the war at Gallipoli).

The French Army had little option to do either, so put its faith in massing its forces at crucial points and refining its methods of attack. This almost succeeded at Vimy Ridge on 9 May 1915, when the latest techniques in artillery registration, "creeping barrages" and infantry tactics based on infiltration, broke the line and allowed French assault troops to seize their objectives. But the break-in could not be exploited and it took too long for reserves to move up to the front, allowing German reserves to seal off the penetration and pulverise it with shellfire.

A nightmare of barbed wire

As quickly as the Allies developed new methods of attack, the defenders worked on counter-measures. "The main characteristic of the French attacks was an irresistible artillery preparation, defying all description, directed against that portion of the line which they intended to break…" noted one German report from 1915. Because French artillery fire was becoming so intensive, German forward positions were soon reduced to "little more than a mass of ruins". Therefore, what was needed was "not one or even several lines of fixed defences, but rather a fortified zone which permitted a certain liberty of action, so that the best use could be made of all the advantages offered by the configuration of the ground, and all the disadvantages could as far as possible be overcome". The western front was now becoming thicker and deeper – a nightmare of sandbags, barbed wire and fortifications.

By the end of 1915, French commanders fully understood the dilemmas they were facing and the difficulty of achieving the great breakthrough that would restore the war of movement. General Philippe Pétain, a future commander-in-chief, noted (in November 1915) how present operations had "demonstrated the difficulty, if not the impossibility, in our current state of armament, our method of preparation and opposing forces, of taking successive enemy positions in one wave". The only thing to do was to conduct a series of separate attacks involving "a considerable use of manpower" and an "unprecedented expenditure of ammunition" to gradually chew through enemy lines. He would fight fire with fire and operate in an avowedly attritional manner, dispensing with the idea of a breakthrough.

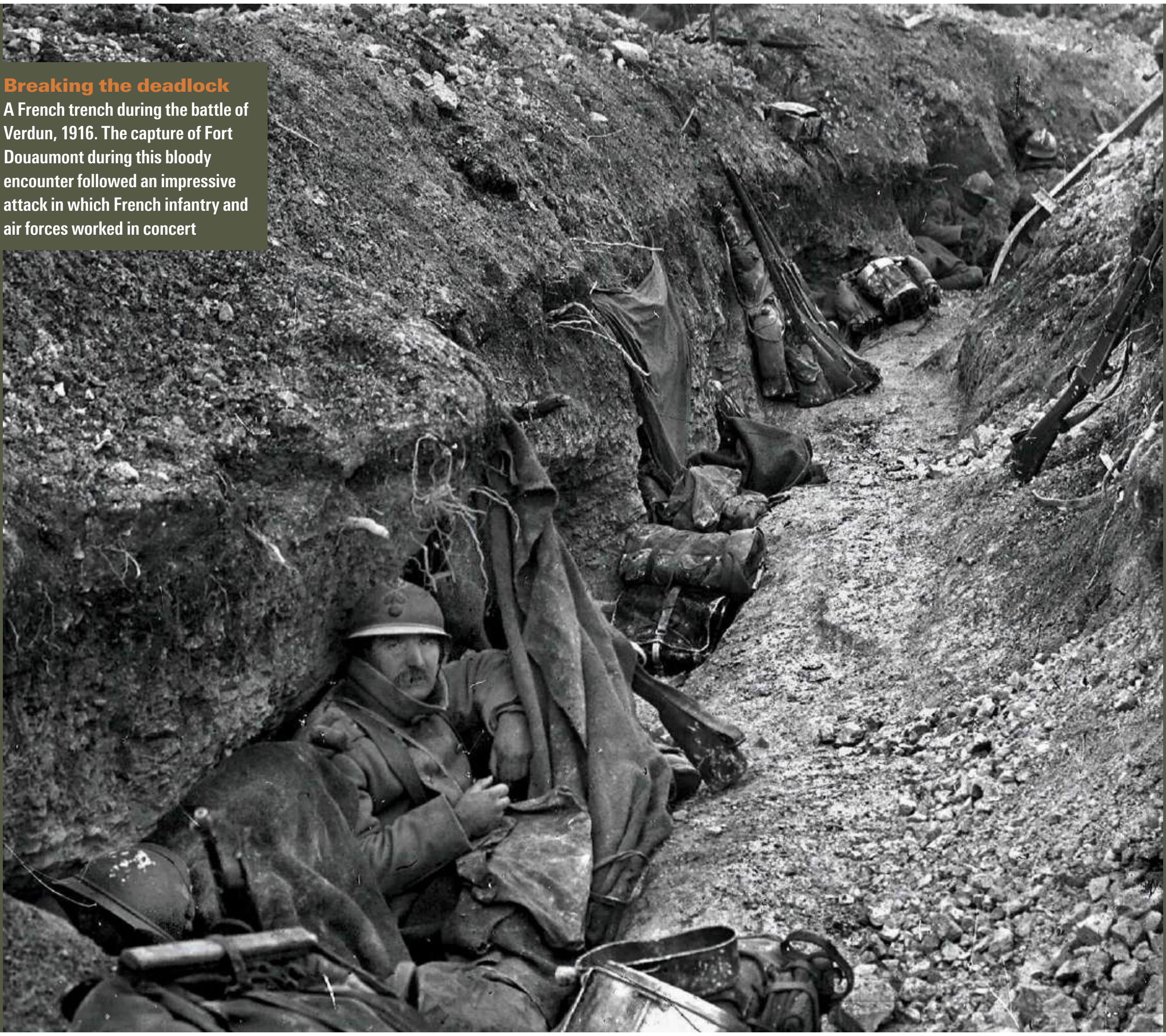
These dilemmas continued into 1916 – a year defined by the twin battles of Verdun and the Somme, which have come to symbolise trench warfare in all its horror. Mass

The armies had weapons of great power, such as quick-firing artillery and machine guns. But they had only limited ability to move quickly

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

A British Vickers machine-gun crew wearing gas masks at the Somme, 1916. The combatants deployed a variety of novel weapons to break the deadlock on the trenches – including poison gas

Allied offensives were often hamstrung by a lack of howitzers – like this one, pictured in action at Wagonlieu



Breaking the deadlock
A French trench during the battle of Verdun, 1916. The capture of Fort Douaumont during this bloody encounter followed an impressive attack in which French infantry and air forces worked in concert

GETTY IMAGES

slaughter became condensed into a small area of the front with such intensive artillery fire that these battlefields was reduced to a moonscape of mud-filled trenches.

The German attack at Verdun in February 1916 was probably the world's first modern battle, in which German aircraft (notably the Fokker *Eindecker*) gained control of the air before the attack went in. German troops went forward (now wearing newly issued steel helmets) after the most murderous bombardment yet seen, intending to occupy ground that had been razed by the shellfire. Although the French line buckled, reserves poured into the sector and a bloody equilibrium ensued.

Various attempts were made to break the deadlock in 1916. Germany used phosgene (that could penetrate French gas masks), sent in flamethrower teams and even deployed their 420mm "Big Bertha" super heavy howitzers – all in the attempt to cripple the French army. The French responded both on the ground and in the air. By the early summer, they had wrested control of the air back from Germany with a new generation of aircraft, including the Morane-Saulnier monoplane and the Nieuport XI *Bébé*, which were grouped into special fighter squadrons and tasked with mounting offensive patrols.

The French also benefited from a rapid industrial mobilisation and were now able to fire off hundreds of thousands of shells every day. On 24 October they recaptured Fort Douaumont (which had fallen in February) after firing half a million shells and coordinating their infantry with air support in an impressive set-piece attack.

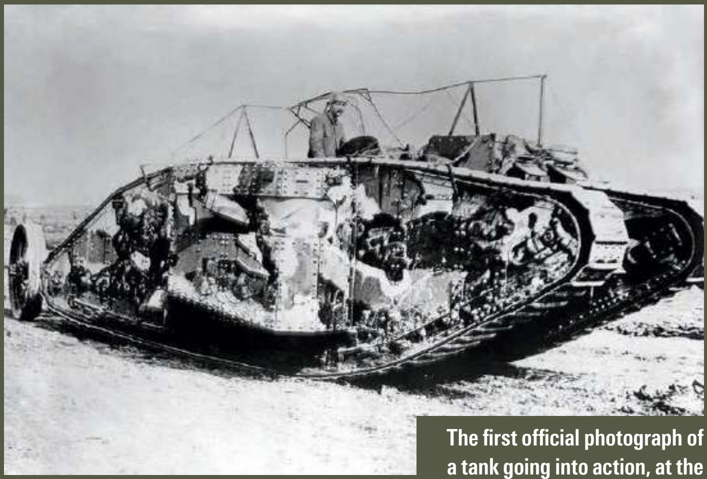
A lack of "knack"

The British also went through the same process of trial and error that the French had undergone. Despite some promising results in the battles of 1915, at Neuve Chapelle and Loos, the attack on the Somme in July 1916 was the first time the British mounted an offensive on a mass scale – attempting to break the line in a way that most French commanders had already abandoned. But lacking the skill or the technology (British guns were frequently inaccurate; shells were plagued by shoddy manufacture; and there was not enough high-explosive), the result was the worst day in the history of the British Army (1 July 1916). Battalion after battalion attacked the German trenches, but found the defences intact, the wire uncut, and the defenders battered, but still full of fight.

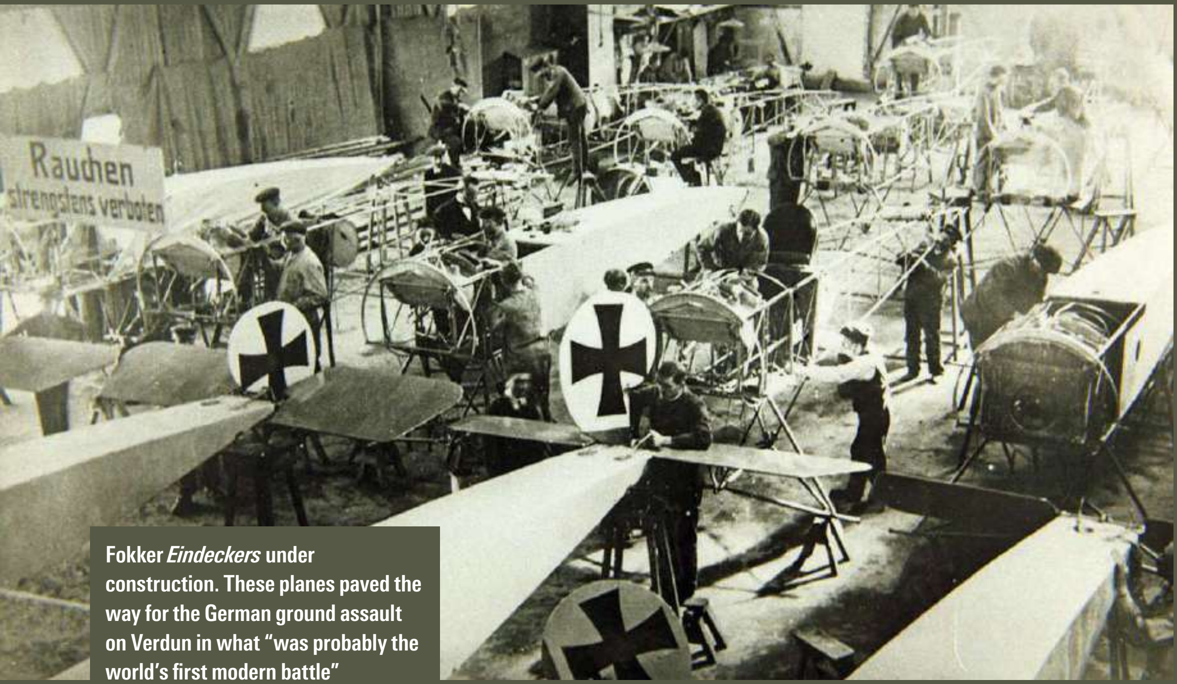
A French observer commented ruefully that the causes of failure were "poor artillery preparation" and the "neglect of mopping-up enemy trenches after the first assault waves" had gone forward. "The British," he concluded, "have not yet got the 'knack'."

Bertas Gruß an Joffre

German troops with a shell bearing the message "Bertha's greetings to [French commander] Joffre", in 1916. Despite such bullishness, their army was struggling to cope with the Allied onslaught



The first official photograph of a tank going into action, at the battle of Flers-Courcelette, in September 1916. For all its limitations, the "Mark 1" had an immediate impact



Fokker *Eindeckers* under construction. These planes paved the way for the German ground assault on Verdun in what "was probably the world's first modern battle"

The disparity between Allied armies awash with guns, shells and tanks, and a threadbare enemy, was stark

It took months before the British got the "knack". Fighting on the Somme went on throughout the summer and autumn, and although British performance improved (most notably in their use of artillery), it was the arrival of tanks in September that seemed to offer a new way of breaking the stranglehold of trench warfare. These armoured vehicles were slow, and vulnerable to field guns, but they had an immediate impact, helping British divisions to advance and presenting the defenders with another significant problem.

That month, one of Germany's most senior commanders, Crown Prince Rupprecht, noted that the army was being worn down by "continued prolonged and exhausting fighting". Germany had previously been "inferior to that of the enemy in terms of size" but "far superior in terms of quality". But this had now changed, owing to the huge numbers of casualties that had hollowed out her armies and left her with a growing problem of poor morale and defeatism.

Now condemned to the defensive, there seemed little way out other than hoping that another wonder weapon, unrestricted submarine warfare (which began on 1 February 1917), would somehow strangle the Allies before she succumbed.

By 1917, the Germans were finding defence on the western front increasingly difficult. Although the year began well with the collapse of the Nivelle Offensive in April (in which a series of over-ambitious French attacks on bad ground failed), the growing disparity between Allied armies awash with guns, shells and tanks, and a German army increasingly threadbare, was a stark one.

Germany continually improved her defensive tactics, widening yet further the defensive "zone", and sucking the British and French in, before hitting them with counter-attacks from the rear. But the cost of doing so was growing. The German command team of Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff recognised that a radical overhaul of industry was needed if they were to procure the weapons they needed. "People – as well as horses – must increasingly be replaced by machines."

Despite growing exhaustion and declining manpower resources, the Allies continued to hone their offensive tactics throughout 1917. By the summer, the combination of heavy artillery, intelligent and flexible infantry formations, new tanks, and the presence of aircraft (providing reconnaissance and spotting, and occasionally bombing and strafing ground targets), allowed the Allies to break into any German positions they cared to attack, inflict damaging losses on their

ALAMY/IWM Q 2488

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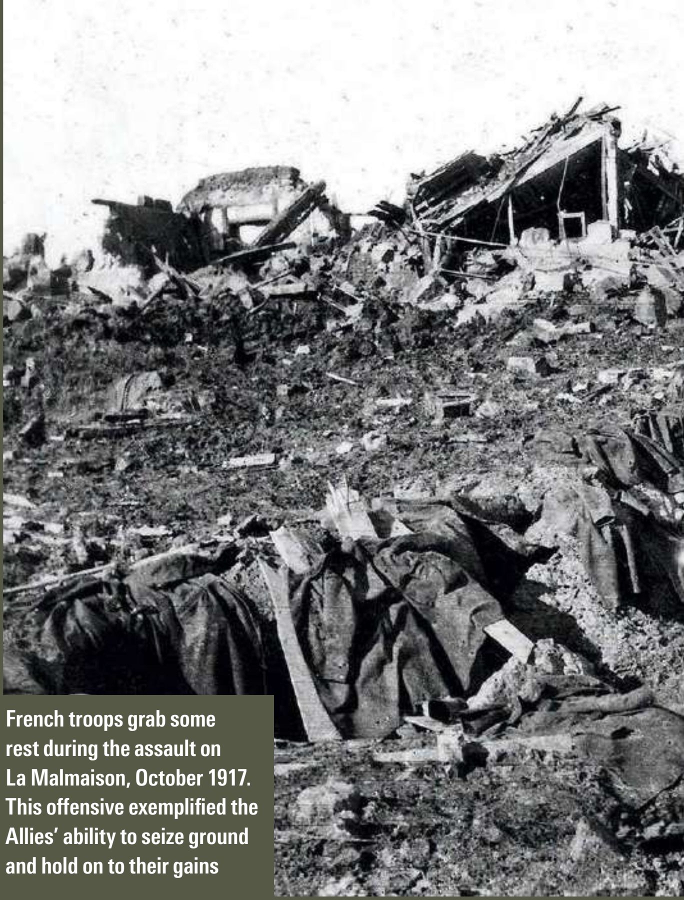
Painful lessons
Allied artillery in action during the battle of the Somme. British tactical naivety cost many lives in the opening stages of the battle, yet, slowly but surely, the attackers learned from their mistakes

During the bloody battles of 1916, the British went through the same process of trial and error that the French had undergone

Allied troops unload shells delivered by rail at Brielen, August 1917. During the course of the conflict, human flesh was replaced by technology and industry – and, in this, the Allies had the edge



French troops grab some rest during the assault on La Malmaison, October 1917. This offensive exemplified the Allies' ability to seize ground and hold on to their gains

A surprise attack by French Renault FT-17 tanks (seen here at Fresnoy-en-Chaussée) helped turn the German Spring Offensive of 1918 into war-ending retreat

Too little, too late

German reserves near Amiens in 1918. They had been tasked with shoring up the Spring Offensive – but, thanks to the efficiency of Allied combined-arms warfare, they failed

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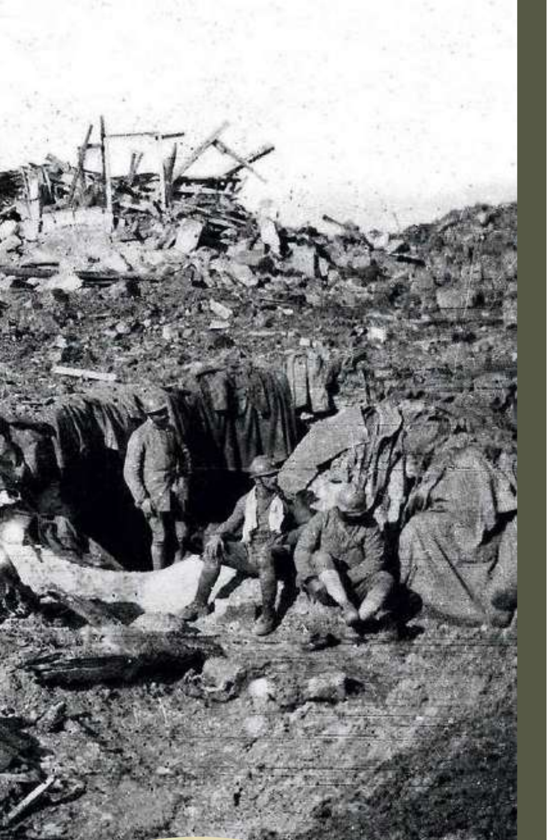

By 1918, the bloody birth of a new age in warfare had taken place, and it was worlds away from the two-dimensional battlefield of 1914

opponents, and hold on to their gains.

Typical of this new approach was the French attack on La Malmaison in October 1917. An abandoned fortress situated on the Chemin des Dames ridge, Malmaison was taken after a six-day bombardment that included the use of "special shells" (phosgene and phosphorous) fired against German gun batteries, saturating them in poison.

Although the ground was difficult, a topsy-turvy moonscape, the infantry took their objectives on time. "It's frightful," remembered one veteran. "Everything is devastated, we stumble into huge craters, German corpses everywhere, blown to pieces, others over by gas, dying. It's dreadful, but superb."

The final roll of the dice

Everything came full circle for the final year, 1918. With Russia defeated, the German supreme command decided to gamble everything on a decisive attack in the west. It was the final roll of the dice. Massing 77 divisions along the attack sector, supported by 6,400 guns, Ludendorff was gambling upon breaking the front, separating the British from the French, rolling up the line, and then forcing the Allies to sue for peace.

It was an audacious, breathtaking plan. Everything that had been learned from four years of war would be put into the operation. A five-hour bombardment, high-explosive and gas, would neutralise enemy positions, interfere with their artillery, and so disorientate the defenders that they could not resist properly. German divisions went through an unrelenting process of training and preparation for the assault. Elite stormtroopers would lead the attack, bypassing centres of resistance to spread chaos in the enemy's rear.

The opening of the German spring offensive on 21 March 1918 ushered in a series of massive battles that would only cease with the armistice of November 1918. Germany's three attacking armies broke through the stretched Allied lines on the Somme, threatening to separate the British and French armies, and inflicting terrible losses. Perhaps as many as 21,000 British soldiers were taken prisoner on 21 March, and with the Allies in disarray, the moment of German victory appeared close.

Faced with what seemed like imminent defeat, the British and French agreed to appoint General Ferdinand Foch supreme commander in order to co-ordinate their efforts in defence of Amiens, where their two armies joined.

The German army had mastered the techniques required to break through a trench network, combining artillery, infantry and air power, to impressive effect, but they lacked the logistical support to sustain such a large offensive over succeeding days, and had little way of moving their troops around the battlefield quickly. The result was impressive initial gains (as seen in the attacks on 9 April, 27 May and 9 June 1918) that proved harder to repeat as Allied reserves arrived, which they were now doing at speed. By the summer of 1918, the United States (which had entered the war in April 1917) was finally able to deploy significant manpower on the western front – thus turning the tide of the war.

All the elements of combined-arms warfare that would define the 20th century – infantry, artillery, armour and air power – had come together by the summer of 1918. The Franco-American counter-attack on the Marne on 18 July wrested the initiative away from the German army and ushered in the final phase of the war. Now the horrors of trench warfare had been banished as a new kind of fighting emerged: more mobile and decisive.

Utilising a surprise tank attack – led by the new Renault FT-17, the first modern tank with a revolving turret – French and American divisions launched themselves against the German lines and took 20,000 prisoners in a matter of hours. Afterwards, a German report noted sadly: "The tanks, employed in numbers never known before and much better developed technically, rolled ahead of the infantry in long, connected lines. Our defence was not adapted to this mass employment on a wide front and was effective only in spots." The events of 18 July were "a turning point in the history of the world war".

Over the next three months the Allied armies mounted a final advance that brought the German army to defeat. Victory had been the result of one of the most impressive and consequential technological and tactical transformations in the history of war.

Human flesh had been replaced by technology and industry. A violent, bloody birth of a new age in warfare had taken place that was worlds away from the two-dimensional battlefield of 1914. The western front deserves to be remembered not as an unchanging arena of futility, but as a radical moment in history.

Nick Lloyd is reader in military and imperial history at King's College London. His latest book, *The Western Front: A History of the First World War*, is published by Penguin Books in March

WATCH

To watch BBC interviews with a selection of people who fought in the **First World War**, filmed in the 1960s, go to *bbc.co.uk/iplayer/group/p01tbj6p*

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What's the earliest mention of a named pet or domestic animal?

People have kept domestic animal companions for thousands of years. In northern Israel, for instance, archaeologists unearthed the remains of a puppy cradled by a human being, some 12,000 years old. Is this the world's oldest known pet? Unfortunately it is almost impossible to say, as pet-keeping implies affection, and this cannot be read off prehistoric burials.

If individual names are indicators of an emotional relationship, however, we can be more precise. The oldest named domestic animal is said to be a palace dog called "Abuwtiyuw" or "Abutiu", buried by a grieving pharaoh in a tomb from the Egyptian sixth dynasty, around 2280 BC. The tablet that encased the dog recorded: "His Majesty ordered that he be buried ceremonially, that he be given a coffin from the royal treasury, fine linen in great quantity, and incense. His majesty also gave perfumed ointment, and ordered that a tomb be built for him by the gangs of masons. His majesty did this for him in order that he might be honoured before the great god, Anubis."

Roman pet owners left similarly gushing tributes, as with a grave marker to "Helena", a dog that lived in the second century AD and was lovingly described as a "foster child". But Roman writers generally tended to disapprove of indulged pets, and at different times and in different places, pet ownership was frowned upon. It is not perhaps until the Victorian age that we see the development of the kind of widespread and accepted pet culture that we know today.

Philip Howell, lecturer in historical geography at the University of Cambridge

ILLUSTRATION BY **GLEN MCBETH**

A woman uses an electric razor to shave her armpit in this 1929 photograph. Removing body hair has been in vogue for millennia

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Why did removing women's body hair become fashionable?

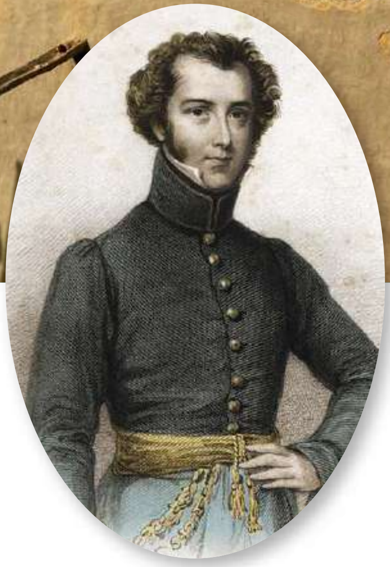
The fashion of women removing facial and pubic hair can be traced back to ancient times. Egyptian vase paintings depicted women without pubic hair. By the 18th century, artists saw female pubic hair as a kind of clothing that needed to be removed to reveal the "beautiful contours" beneath. Women were inventive in making depilation (hair removal) products, using arsenic, eggshells, or cat faeces, for example.

The meaning given to hair removal has differed dramatically over time and place. The smooth, hairless faces of European women signalled goodness as well as youth and beauty. For early 20th-century American women, hairlessness represented cleanliness, which was next to godliness. Pornography has popularised the Brazilian wax, as well as feminist claims that depilation is a sign of women's voluntary subjection to masculine heteronormative ideals. Meanwhile, global capitalism has sought to convince women that underarm hair is smelly and therefore undesirable.

The politics of hair removal remains central to the staging of the self.

Joanna Bourke, presenter of the Gresham College lecture Body Parts: A History of Hair: *bit.ly/2Yg4hUo*

The exterior of Timbuktu's imposing Djinguereber mosque. In the 19th century, the city was seen by the British public as a mysterious, exotic locale



A portrait of the Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing, who entered Timbuktu in 1826. When he visited the city, it was a shadow of its former self

When and how did Timbuktu become shorthand for "somewhere very far away"?

››› For centuries, Timbuktu was known as a famous city of Islamic scholarship, and it boasted impressive global connections. Its Djinguereber mosque was designed in part by an architect from Granada in Spain, Al-Sahili – and, from the 14th century onwards, annual caravans of pilgrims from the surrounding Mali empire set out from Timbuktu and travelled via Cairo to Mecca.

In Europe, knowledge of Timbuktu spread from this time. It was included in the 1375 Catalan Atlas, and Genoese travellers in the Sahara in the 1460s mentioned its importance. The Andalusian Muslim known as Leo Africanus visited the city in 1510 and described it in a book of his travels, which circulated widely in Europe.

In the early 19th century, two Scottish explorers ventured to the Sahel and the region around Timbuktu. First came Mungo Park, who did not go into the city but instead sailed past it en route to his death in Bussa, Nigeria. Then, in 1826, Alexander Gordon Laing entered the city. By this time, however, Timbuktu had fallen into a severe decline.

For the British public, Timbuktu was characterised by this 19th-century mystery – and the imperial competition between British and French explorers to get there first. It represented the faraway locus of imperial dreams, competition and power. The city was something "savage" and yet conquered (or at least uncovered) in the exoticism of travel books, distant in its decline.

Toby Green, author of *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (Penguin, 2020)

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DID YOU KNOW…?

Wounded pride

The legendary Apache leader Geronimo (shown right), and five other Native American chiefs, rode on horseback down Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington DC in the 1905 inauguration parade for President Theodore Roosevelt. Once a much-feared guerrilla warrior, Geronimo had been more or less a prisoner since his surrender in 1886. Roosevelt said he included him in the parade "to give the people a good show". Geronimo died four years later, bitterly regretting that he'd ever surrendered at all.

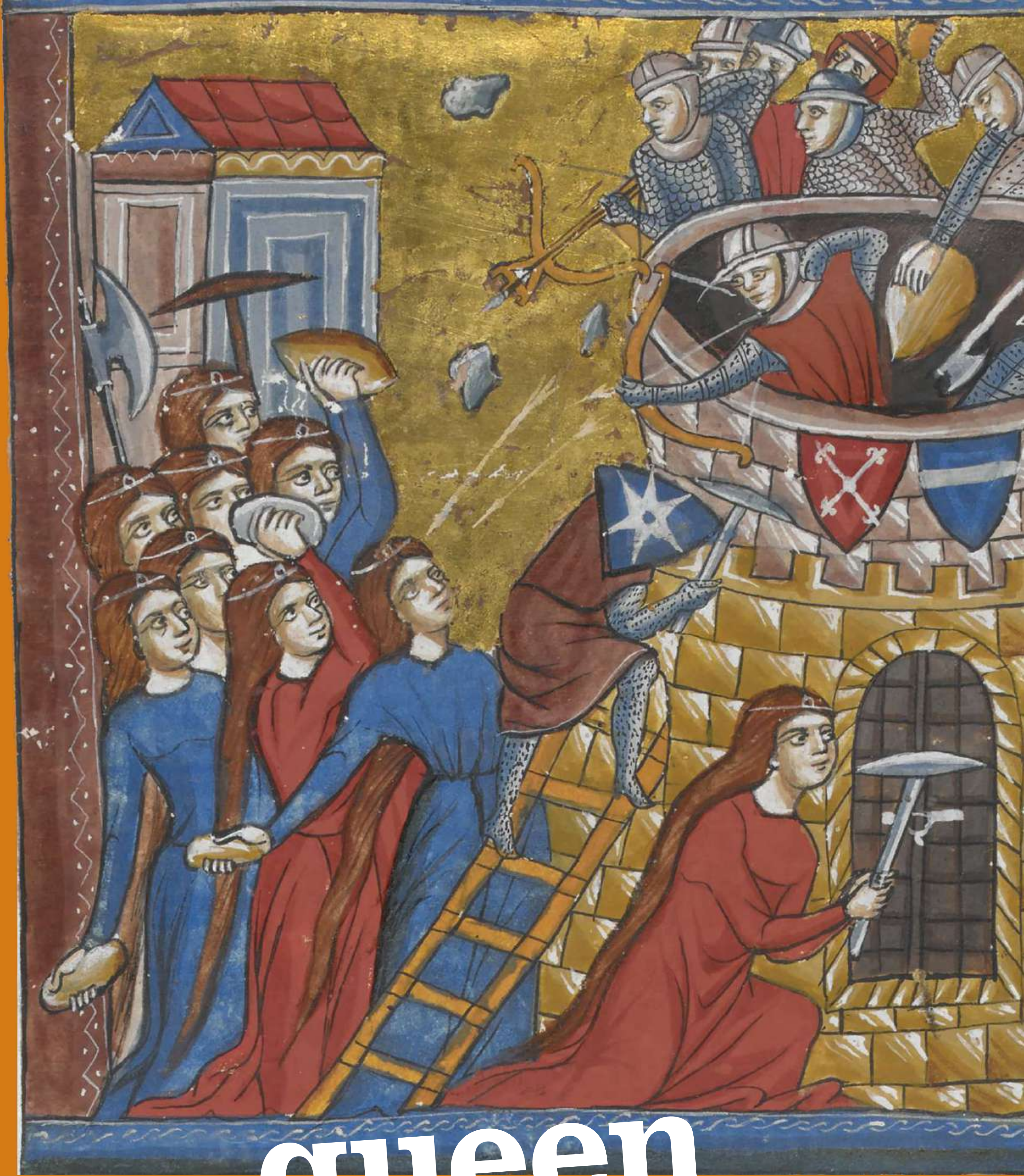
Doctor's orders?

Tomato ketchup was once seen as a medicine that would cure indigestion and diarrhoea. In 1834, an American physician named John Cook Bennett decided that tomatoes were some kind of miraculous foodstuff. He concocted his own ketchup recipe and other tomato-centric recipes, claiming the main ingredient could remedy all kinds of ailments. Bennett was also a leading member of the Mormon Church in its early years but was excommunicated from it for "various immoralities".

Lucky duck

An Australian rower named Bobby Pearce won a race at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games despite stopping to allow a family of ducks to cross his lane. Pearce was selected to go to the Amsterdam games after winning his nation's single sculls championship. He was also chosen to carry the Australian flag in the opening ceremony. In his quarter-final race, he halted to let the wandering ducks past but still posted the fastest time. He went on to win the gold medal. H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history



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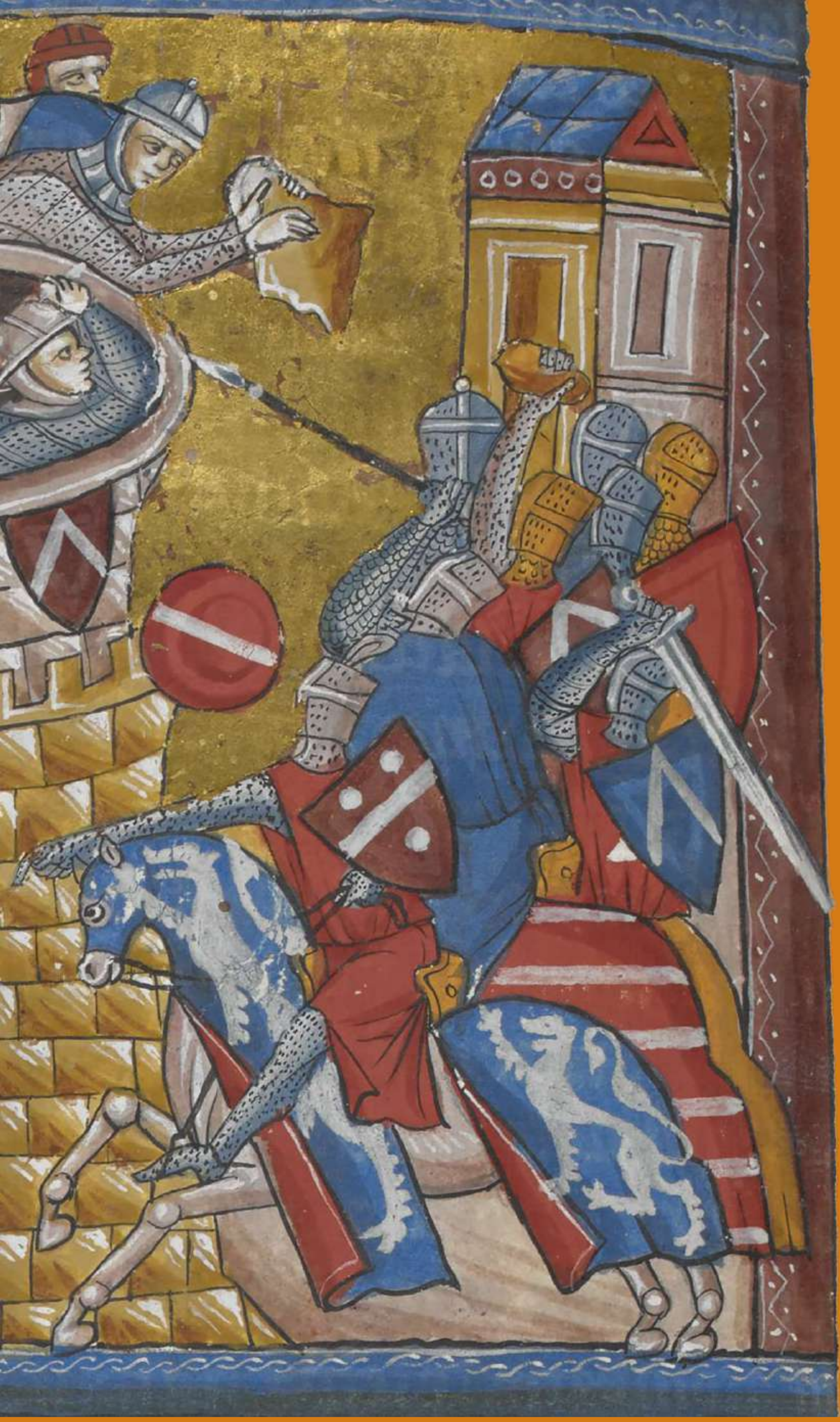
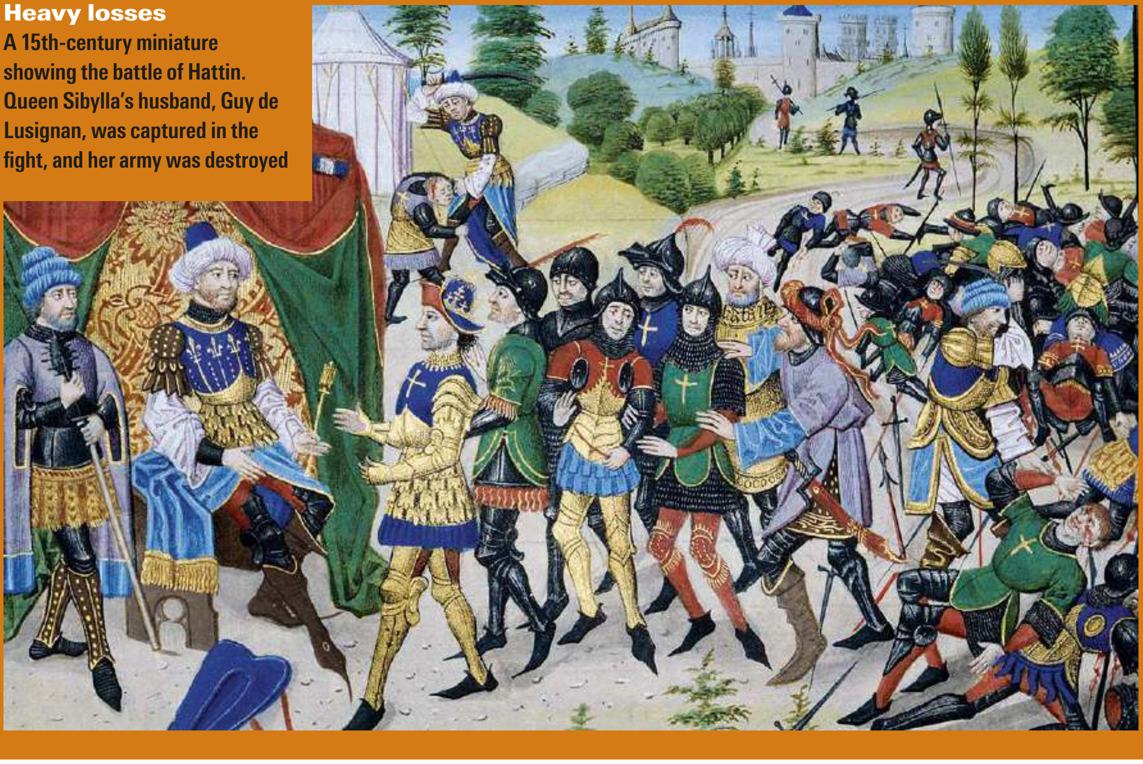


BRIDGEMAN

Forgotten history
A medieval illustration of women fighting and toiling alongside men during a siege. The kingdom of Jerusalem's female rulers played a vital role in the crusades, but they have been historically overlooked

For centuries, accounts of the crusades have left out one key element: the actions of women. **Katherine Pangonis** chronicles the lives of the formidable queens who ruled and fought in Jerusalem

# of Jerusalem



Heavy losses
A 15th-century miniature showing the battle of Hattin. Queen Sibylla's husband, Guy de Lusignan, was captured in the fight, and her army was destroyed

Twisting the past
Eva Green as Sibylla in the 2005 film *Kingdom of Heaven*. Jerusalem's queens have been victims of Orientalism in popular culture, Katherine Pangonis argues

> **"Though a woman, I seemed a warrior… though filled with fear, I learned to conceal my weakness"**

On 2 October 1187, Jerusalem – the holy city held by Christians for four generations, and the prize of the First Crusade – fell to the Sultan Saladin after a short siege. The Christians were outnumbered ten to one, but the city held out long enough for favourable terms to be negotiated. Jerusalem was defended by an unlikely trio: Patriarch Heraclius, a high-ranking religious official; a knight named Balian of Ibelin; and Sibylla, queen of Jerusalem, who'd been crowned only a year earlier, following the deaths of her male relatives (see box on page 40 for more on her background).

Between them they made a robust defence against impossible odds. Food stores and sanitation within the city were under great strain, and they had next to no trained knights or men-at-arms – the army had been destroyed nearly three months previously at the battle of Hattin, where Sibylla's husband, Guy de Lusignan, had been taken captive.

An ordinary woman called Margaret of Beverley, who had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, had become trapped in the city as Saladin advanced. Wearing a cooking pot as a helmet, Margaret helped defend the city. She related: "I carried out all the functions of a soldier that I could. I wore a breastplate like a man; I came and went on the ramparts, with a cauldron on my head for a helmet. Though a woman, I seemed a warrior, I threw the weapon; though filled with fear, I learned to conceal my weakness."

Nevertheless, historians have disputed the role of women in the siege of Jerusalem – and indeed what part Queen Sibylla herself played in the strategy and defence of her city, with many being reluctant to give her much credit. This is part of a wider trend of historians not including women in their accounts of the past.

But the role that women played in commanding sieges in the Latin East is well documented, and at least one contemporary source places Sibylla in Jerusalem during the siege. It is natural that she as queen regnant, the highest-status figure in the city, would have taken a commanding role. Sibylla had the authority to command, Balian the military expertise to strategise, and Heraclius controlled the city's funds.

As Jerusalem's citizens fought to repel the attackers from the walls, inside the city women shaved their heads, repented and begged for salvation. All the men who could fight in Jerusalem were knighted to boost their confidence and galvanise them in their fight against the enemy. But it was to no avail. When the walls began to collapse and resistance became hopeless, the commanders decided to negotiate terms of surrender.

The best that Sibylla, Balian and Heraclius could hope for was the survival and freedom of the Christians within the city, and Sibylla's personal safety. On the brink of defeat, they were not in a strong bargaining position.

Despite this, Saladin did agree to the offer of surrender. He did not have much choice: when he initially refused, Balian swore not only to fight to the death, but also to destroy the Dome of the Rock, one of the most sacred sites of Islam, if the sultan did not offer terms. Sibylla's freedom was guaranteed, and the Christians within the city's walls were allowed to purchase their freedom.

For all this, Jerusalem was lost, and Sibylla was a queen without a kingdom.

Lopsided legend

The Christians had held Jerusalem for 88 years. Out of the blood and ashes of the First Crusade, the kingdom of Jerusalem had been forged. Meanwhile, the Christian states of Outremer had grown from a rag-tag group of sequentially secured principalities and counties, centring on the kingdom of Jerusalem. Legends of the questing knights in shining armour who had led the First Crusade abounded in Europe, feeding into the outpouring of Arthurian literature of the High Middle Ages. The crusade became the stuff of legend to those Europeans left at home. Songs were written, as well as stories, poetry, and perhaps most importantly,

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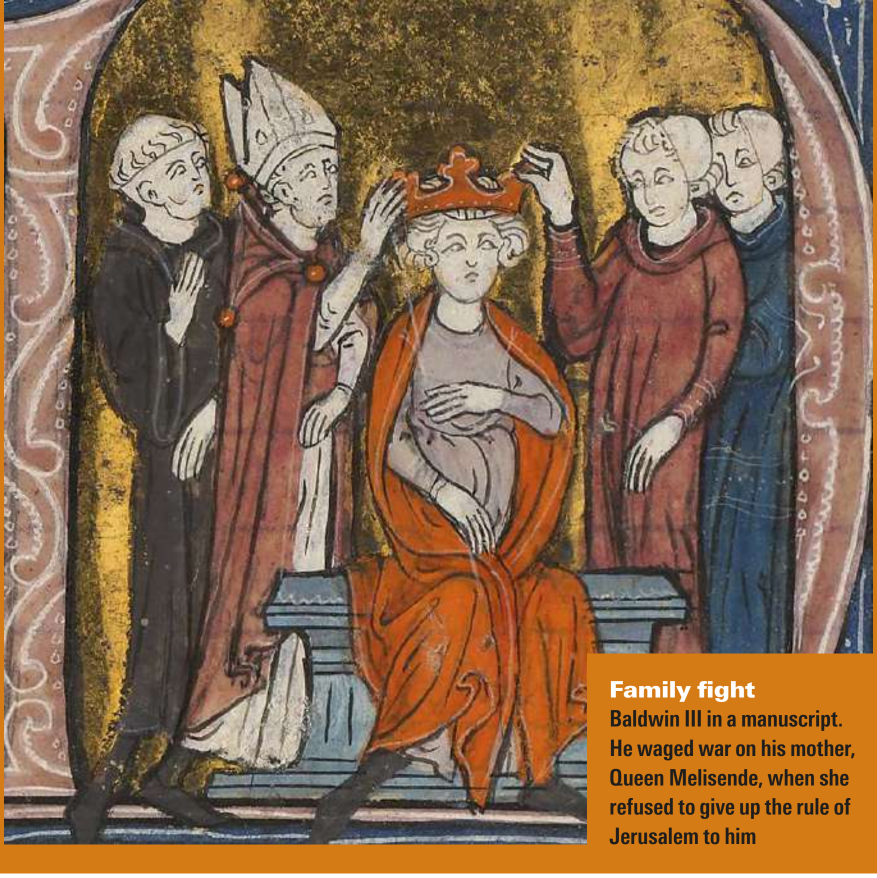

Family fight
Baldwin III in a manuscript. He waged war on his mother, Queen Melisende, when she refused to give up the rule of Jerusalem to him

ALAMY/BNF

histories as well. The First Crusade and the formation of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem became one of the best documented events in medieval history and provides a rich trove of sources for historians today.

However, something important is missing from both medieval and modern histories of Outremer, and that is the voices of the women of the kingdom. For centuries the stories of the queens and princesses of Outremer have been all but written out of the historical record. Where they are included, the details are sketchy, and they have led to highly sexualised and Orientalist portrayals in popular culture. Take, for instance, Eva Green as Queen Sibylla in the 2005 film *Kingdom of Heaven* whose costumes blend eastern styles and cultures with the aim of making her appear "exotic". In the film Sibylla cheats on her husband, Guy, and plots his murder – despite all the evidence suggesting Sibylla was completely faithful to him and that she laid her kingdom at his feet.

The historical legacy of women rulers is subject to a variety of unpredictable forces: when they've been studied at all, each of the queens and princesses of Jerusalem have received very different treatment at the hands of historians. Some have been turned into sexual fantasies; some have had achievements or crimes attributed to them for which there is little evidence; others have simply been ignored. Most have been remembered as the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of powerful men, not as autonomous individuals and active leaders with their own political agency. This is changing. A new interest in medieval queenship has been piqued in the last 50 years, and more attention has begun to be paid to uncovering the lives of women.

Penchant for power

The most significant woman ruler of medieval Outremer was Sibylla's grandmother, the first queen regnant of Jerusalem and "a woman of unusual wisdom". Her name was Melisende, daughter of Baldwin II and Morphia of Melitene. As the eldest of four daughters, she was named her father's heir.

In 1152, 35 years before Sibylla faced Saladin, Melisende also defended the city against a besieging army. The attack she endured was relentless, with the contemporary historian William of Tyre writing "the besieged were denied any chance to rest", but they "resisted with all their might and strove to repel force by force… They hesitated not to hurl back injuries upon their enemies and to work equal destruction upon them."

It was not the army of an Islamic sultan that Melisende had to repel, but rather that of her own son, Baldwin III of Jerusalem. Queen Melisende, now 47, was fighting to keep at bay the son who wanted to oust her from the throne she had occupied for more than 20 years. Just as Melisende was determined not to cede power, Baldwin was equally determined to claim it. Shocking as this scene may have been, a Christian mother and son openly at war over the holiest city in Christendom, the real surprise was that it had taken this long for the conflict to arise.

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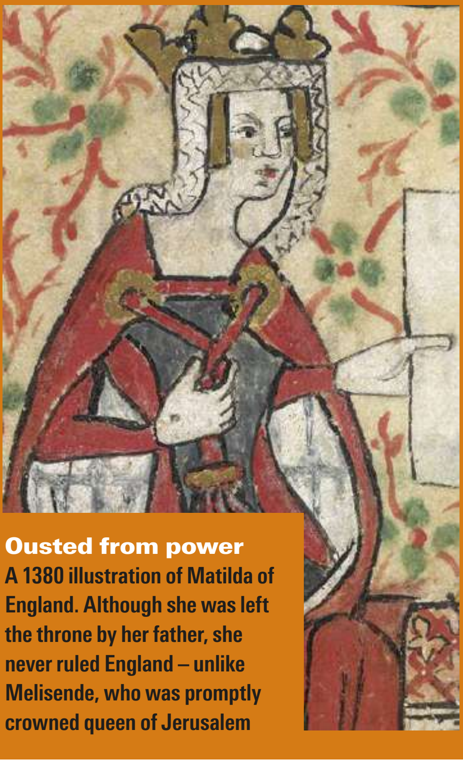
On his deathbed, Melisende's father had made an amendment to his will which safeguarded her hereditary right to rule. Instead of leaving control of the kingdom of Jerusalem to her husband, Fulk, as had been expected, Baldwin II created a triumvirate of power and left it in equal parts to his daughter, son-in-law and infant grandson – that very same Baldwin III who 20 years later would beleaguer his mother with "ballistae, bows and hurling machines".

Baldwin II made his deathbed decision for many politically and dynastically motivated reasons. He wanted to make sure his son-in-law, Fulk, could not as king invent a pretext to divorce Melisende and take another wife, thus writing Melisende and Baldwin III out of the succession. The old king wanted the throne to stay tied to his bloodline. Furthermore, Fulk, being French, was a foreigner in Jerusalem and unlikely to command unswerving respect from the local nobility – unlike Melisende, who was second-generation crusader royalty, born and raised in the east and half Armenian through her mother.

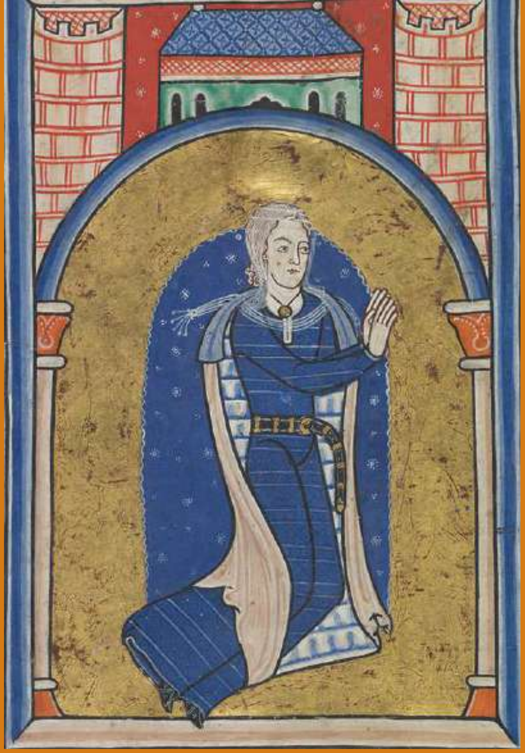
Melisende's designation as heir closely mirrored that of Matilda of England, whose father, Henry I of England, similarly left his kingdom to his daughter. Yet whereas Matilda was never able to gain England's throne as her father had wished, it was a different story entirely for Melisende.

When Baldwin II of Jerusalem died, his daughter and son-in-law were crowned king



Ousted from power
A 1380 illustration of Matilda of England. Although she was left the throne by her father, she never ruled England – unlike Melisende, who was promptly crowned queen of Jerusalem

Death becomes him
A 12th-century seal of Baldwin IV, Queen Sibylla's brother, who died without children. In Outremer, fighting men had short life expectancies, and the women who survived them became lynchpins of power



Following in her footsteps
Eleanor of Aquitaine, depicted in a 12th-century prayer book. She was likely inspired by Melisende's example of queenship

and queen without demur. But while Melisende's accession to the throne was smooth, her quest for power was not. In the early years of her reign, Fulk sought to circumvent her authority in matters of government, and it was only after a scandal of epic proportion involving an alleged affair, trial by combat and an outright rebellion that Melisende was able to exert her authority in the ruling of Jerusalem. This brings us to consider the distinction between authority and power. Authority is the right to rule, and power is the ability to actually do so. Medieval queens faced the dual challenge of first being awarded authority in a fiercely patriarchal world, and then converting it into tangible power. The former challenge hinged on politics, the latter on personality.

Bitter pill of female rule

The unique instability and near constant state of crisis in Outremer created a political environment in which noble-born women could be propelled to prominence and wield real power. Life expectancy was short for a fighting man in Outremer: in the 12th century a king of Jerusalem who was born in Outremer died on average at the age of 26, in contrast to native kings of France who enjoyed an average life expectancy of 57. If he was not slaughtered on the battlefield or in an unexpected raid, he could be struck down by disease or mishap. For instance, Sibylla's brother, Baldwin IV, died childless under the scourges of leprosy, and following the death of his young nephew, his throne eventually passed to his sister. Women began to outlive their male relatives who normally would have controlled them, and they became lynchpins of power and political loyalty in their own right. Beyond this, by pure chance the kings of Jerusalem found themselves blessed with daughters rather than the sons they desperately craved. This forced society in Outremer to adapt to the concept of queenship and swallow the bitter pill of female rule.

The unique instability and near constant state of crisis in Outremer meant women could wield real power

Melisende not only succeeded in converting her authority into power, but she also managed to retain it for nearly a decade once her authority had expired. Fulk died in a hunting accident, and afterwards Melisende remained unmarried and ruled independently. Soon after Fulk's passing she received a letter from Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and one of the most influential figures of the day. He wrote to her: "The eyes of all look to you and on you alone the whole weight of the kingdom falls. You must put your hand to strong things and show a man in a woman, doing what is to be done in the spirit of counsel and fortitude."

Melisende must have snapped her fingers at this. She knew this already and had been ruling jointly with her husband for years before this point. Yet the letter remains a remarkable document: a senior churchman giving his blessing to the independent rule of a woman. But Bernard also emphasised that Melisende's role as sole ruler should last only until her son was of age. Baldwin II certainly never intended Melisende to rule once Baldwin III was an adult, and yet when the time came to cede power to her son, Melisende declined. For six years, she stifled Baldwin III's claims to the kingdom until the situation climaxed in the scene related earlier, in which the son besieged his mother in the citadel of Jerusalem. She did eventually step back from governing, and Baldwin III took over ruling the kingdom – although Melisende remained highly respected.

Making their mark

Melisende was only the second queen regnant to be famed in Europe, after Urraca of Leon-Castile, and her strength and independence set an example of queenship for noblewomen in the east and the west. Eleanor of Aquitaine travelled to Jerusalem as part of the Second Crusade, and while she was there she met Melisende at the height of her power. This encounter must have made an impression on Eleanor: the example of a woman ruling a kingdom independent of her husband, and clearly having a higher status than her son, would have been hard for an ambitious woman like Eleanor to overlook.

However, Melisende was not alone in her struggles to assert agency as a woman in

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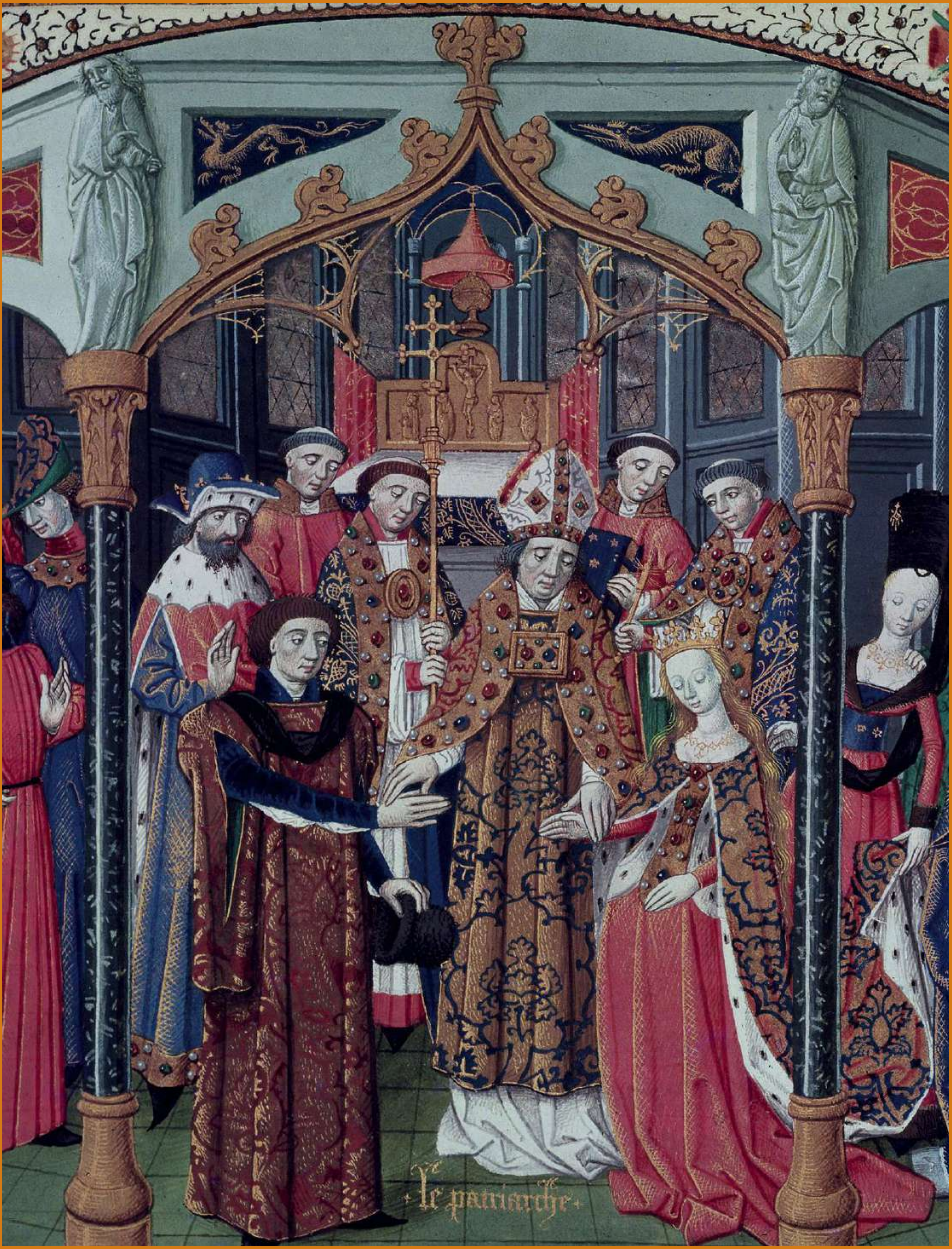

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Power struggle An illumination depicting Sibylla and Guy de Lusignan's wedding. Many have pointed to her decision to remarry the domineering Guy, whom Sibylla deferred to, as the reason for her kingdom's defeat

Outremer. Her sister Alice became princess of Antioch. Widowed in her late teens or early twenties, she attempted to defy first her father and then her brother-in-law, both the kings of Jerusalem, and rule Antioch on her own, as regent for her young daughter. Three times she was thwarted before eventually retiring from public life, having attempted all manner of tactics, from attempting to ally with the Turkish Atabeg Zengi against her father, to uniting the similarly discontented lords of Tripoli and Edessa against Fulk, to simply trying to turn the people of the city against the king. She was succeeded by her daughter Constance, who was likewise widowed young and held similar ambitions of independent rule to her mother.

Constance in contrast erred on the side of subtlety in her endeavours and was met with greater success than her mother. She ruled Antioch independently for a number of years, before falling head over heels in love with the mercenary soldier Reynald de Châtillon and marrying him.

Hodierna of Tripoli, Melisende and Alice's younger sister, was implicated in two assassination attempts as she battled for power: one against a rival claimant to the county of Tripoli, and the other against her own husband, Raymond of Tripoli, who was mysteriously assassinated after a spat with his wife. The argument was of such epic proportions that Hodierna had resolved to leave him to journey to Jerusalem with her sister, and although the general consensus was that he was murdered by members of the Hashashin sect, he was a highly unusual target for this Islamic group, and the timing of his argument with his wife was suspicious. After Raymond's death, Hodierna was allowed to remain unmarried and rule Tripoli as regent for her two children.

For better or for worse, the queens of Jerusalem made their marks on the history of the region and that of medieval queenship. The dynasty represents a unique line of women rulers, whose experiences and achievements deserve further attention.

Katherine Pangonis is a historian specialising in the medieval world of the Mediterranean and Middle East. Her book, *Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule*, is out now from W&N

READ The March issue of **BBC History Revealed** magazine, which is on sale now, contains an essential guide to medieval queens

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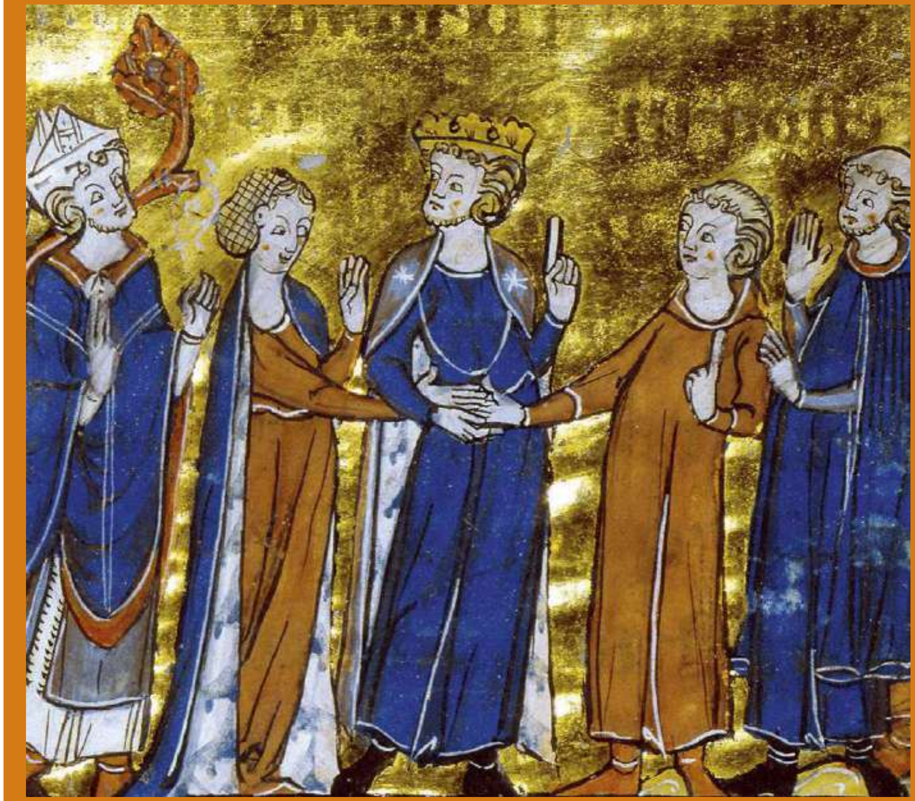
BLINDED BY LOVE

Did Queen Sibylla's controversial decision to marry her former husband cause her kingdom to crumble?



An illumination depicting Sibylla and Guy de Lusignan's wedding. Many have pointed to her decision to remarry the domineering Guy, whom Sibylla deferred to, as the reason for her kingdom's defeat

BRIDGEMAN

Jerusalem's queens didn't always make the correct choices. For instance, Sibylla – who was crowned queen of Jerusalem in 1186, a year before the city fell to Sultan Saladin – sparked fury among the region's barons on the day of her coronation.

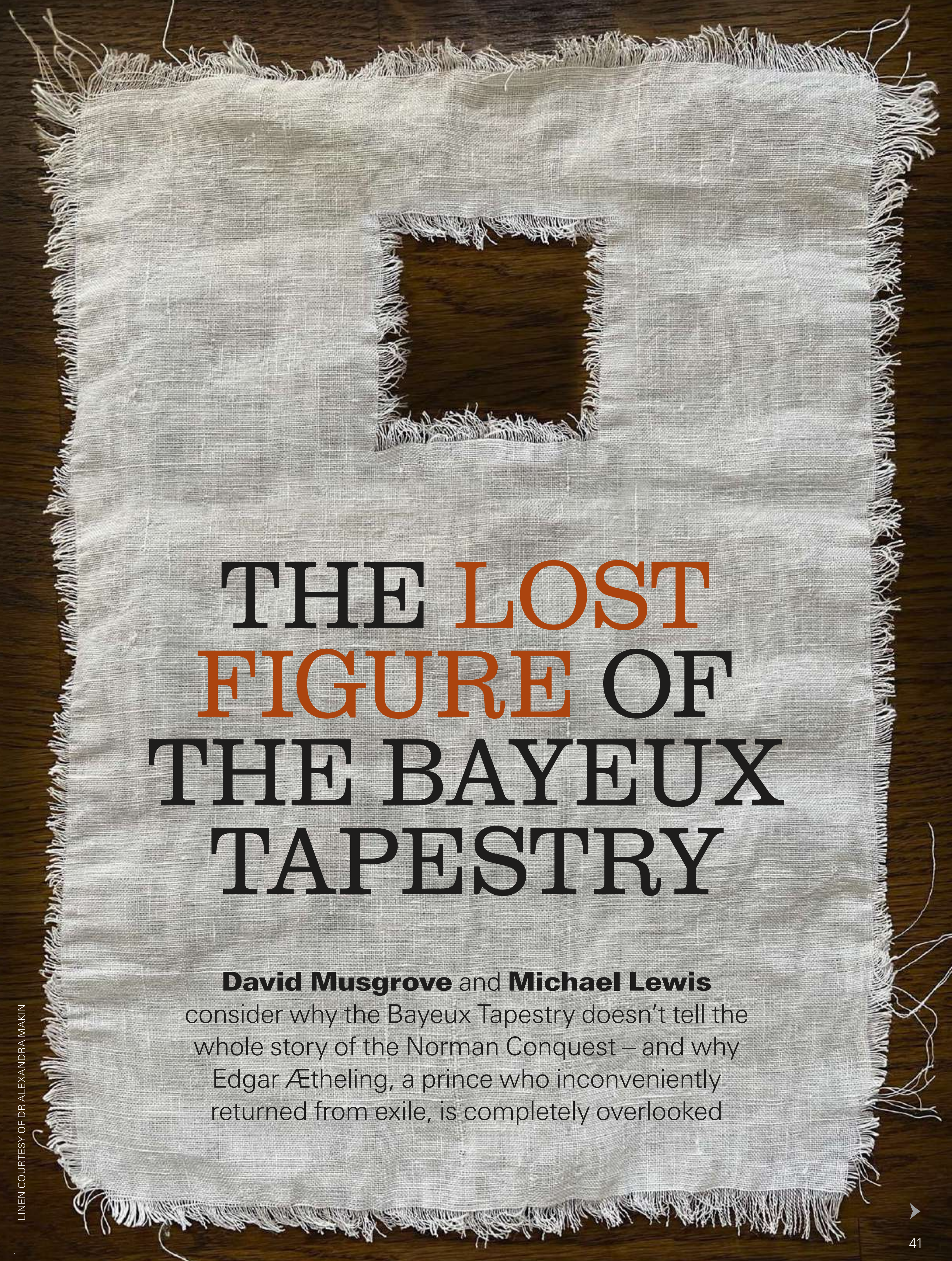
As soon as she was anointed and the crown settled on her brow in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Sibylla rose and declared to the congregation: "I, Sibylla, choose for myself as my king and as my husband Guy of Lusignan, the man who has been my husband."

Uproar followed.

Sibylla pressed on, proclaiming: "He is a worthy man and in every way of upright character: with the help of God he will rule his people well."

The explanation for this curious speech and the reaction to it is as follows. Sibylla, after the deaths of all her male relatives, stood as the heir to the kingdom. Those nobility willing to support her only did so on the condition that she divorce her unpopular second husband, Guy (she had been first married to William of Montferrat, but he had died in 1177). Sibylla agreed – as long as she would be allowed to choose her third husband from among the nobility afterwards. Shrugging, they agreed. They did not expect her to select her recently divorced Guy as her third husband the minute the holy oil had made her queen.

This was a powerful act of agency on Sybilla's part, but this first autonomous act of her reign may also have been her last. Guy was likely the dominant partner in their relationship. Sibylla had the right to rule as queen regnant rather than queen consort, a key distinction between being the actual ruler, or simply the wife of the ruler, but this was a right she does not seem to have claimed. Many blame her devotion to Guy and her willingness to let him make decisions for the defeat of the army and collapse of the kingdom of Jerusalem.



THE LOST FIGURE OF THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY

David Musgrove and **Michael Lewis** consider why the Bayeux Tapestry doesn't tell the whole story of the Norman Conquest – and why Edgar Ætheling, a prince who inconveniently returned from exile, is completely overlooked

LINEN COURTESY OF DR ALEXANDRA MAKIN

It's 70 metres long, tells a tale that stretches over land and sea, covers a crucial piece of history, and has a wide cast of characters. Yet the Bayeux Tapestry does not relate the whole story of the Norman Conquest of 1066. It vividly records the head-to-head clash between England's King Harold II "Godwinson" and Duke William of Normandy, placing these two protagonists firmly in the thick of the action. But it omits pivotal parts and players, notably the other battles of the Conquest year that took place in northern England – Fulford and Stamford Bridge – and one man in particular, Edgar Ætheling, who might have been king in 1066.

The Bayeux Tapestry is a unique survival of medieval embroidery (it's not a true tapestry, despite the name) and undoubtedly one of the most famous sources for the Norman conquest of England. Its scene-by-scene cartoon approach lends it an accessibility that no contemporary written account can match. When the story broke in 2018 that the Tapestry might be loaned to Britain from Normandy for a temporary exhibition – probably at the British Museum – while its museum in Bayeux is redeveloped, it hit the news worldwide.

Because the Bayeux Tapestry plays out with the clash between Harold and William as its key narrative, and because it is so globally famous, the bits that the embroidery overlooks have to a greater or lesser extent been excluded from broader understanding of the Conquest story.

So, what does it show? Briefly, the Bayeux Tapestry starts with King Edward "the Confessor" in conversation with his leading earl, Harold; the year is probably 1064, the location likely Westminster, possibly Winchester, and the topic presumably Harold's forthcoming trip to the continent – though none of that is spelt out. Earl Harold leaves for the coast, crosses the Channel, and after a short misadventure at the hands of a local lord (Count Guy of Ponthieu), ends up at the court of Duke William in Normandy. The pair then head off on a military campaign against rebels in Brittany. According to the Tapestry, the campaign is a success for William, and Harold acquits himself well – even saving Normans from certain death in the river Couesnon (which divides Normandy from Brittany).

Harold makes an oath of some sort to William, which has been assumed to be in support of William's claim to England's throne – that claim being based, according to the Norman chroniclers William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges, on a supposed promise made by King Edward to William some years earlier, probably in about 1051.

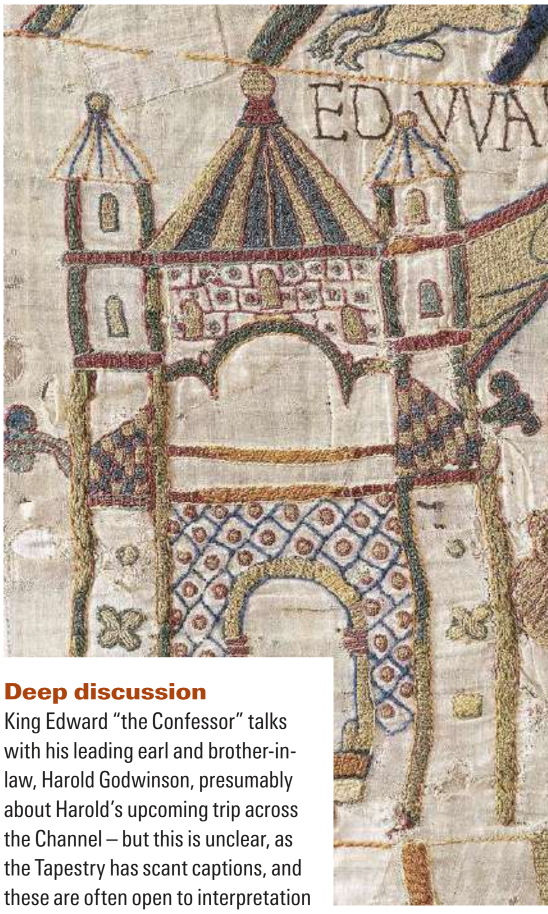
Because the Bayeux Tapestry is so famous, the bits that it overlooks have been more or less excluded from the Conquest story

The earl promptly returns to the court of King Edward, where the aforementioned monarch proceeds to die in short order after a deathbed scene and is buried in his new abbey church of St Peter at Westminster. Harold swiftly takes the throne, seemingly in breach of the oath he made in Normandy. William gets wind of this perfidy, builds a fleet, assembles an army, crosses the Channel and waits for Harold to arrive for a fight. Harold duly brings his own force to Hastings, where he is killed and his army is defeated, and thus William takes the throne for himself – crowned in the Confessor's abbey at Westminster on Christmas Day 1066.

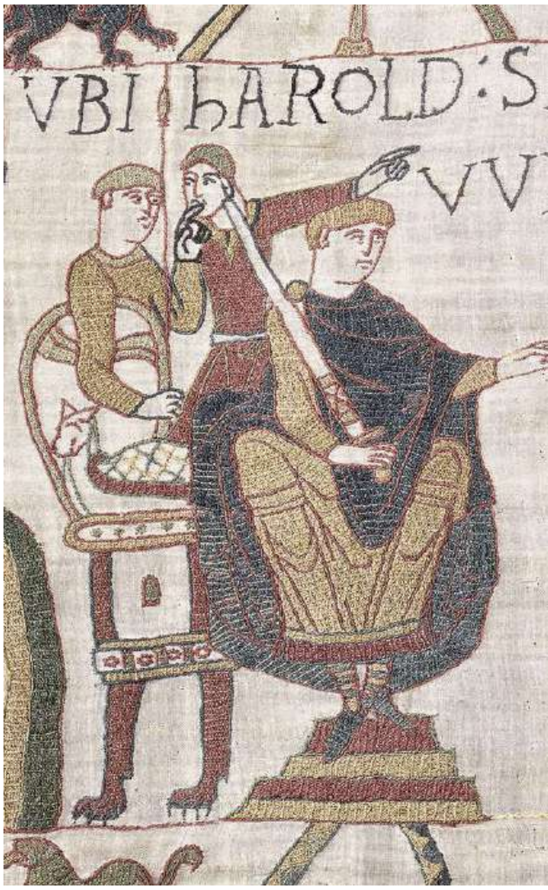
Nothing but the truth?

This is a pretty easy narrative to follow. It's William v Harold. Harold puts himself in the wrong by reneging on a sacred oath, and though both men are shown as worthy warriors, William wins the day with right and might on his side – perhaps with God deciding the victor's and vanquished's fates. William's claim is justified and justifiable, and the logical progress to his victory is easy to see.

However, this straightforward story is not all that it seems. The images do not speak for themselves because though they are accompanied by captions, these are generally terse and leave much room for interpretation; even in 1066 there might have been confusion, and certainly divergence, about the circumstances of events that led to the Norman conquest of England. Ambiguity in the Bayeux Tapestry is rife, so we need to rely on and reference the other documentary sources of the time to understand what's going on, or at least have an idea of what its designer intended us to presume. It is the unique nature of the Tapestry that it never makes a categorical statement, including, for instance, the oath



Deep discussion King Edward "the Confessor" talks with his leading earl and brother-in-law, Harold Godwinson, presumably about Harold's upcoming trip across the Channel – but this is unclear, as the Tapestry has scant captions, and these are often open to interpretation



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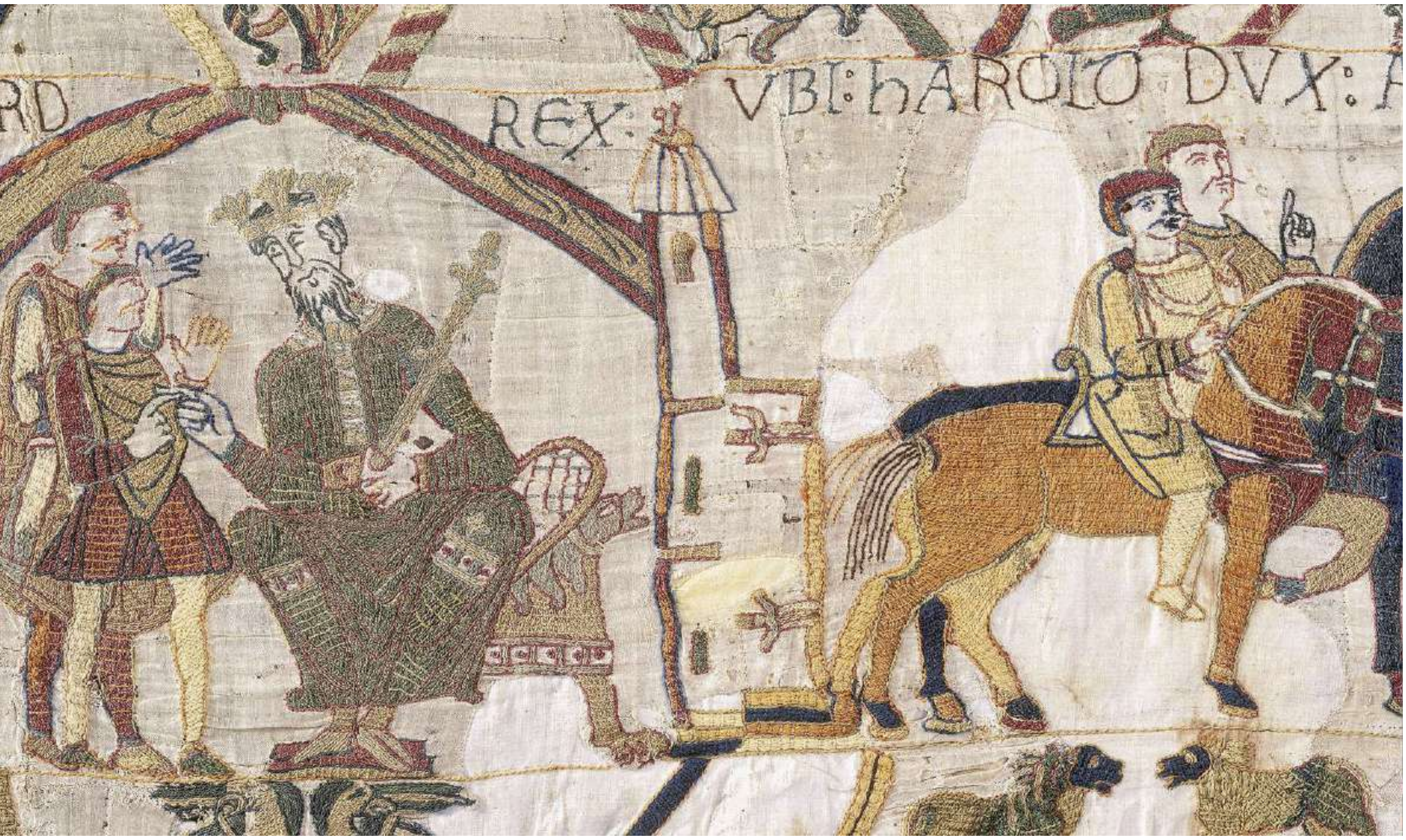
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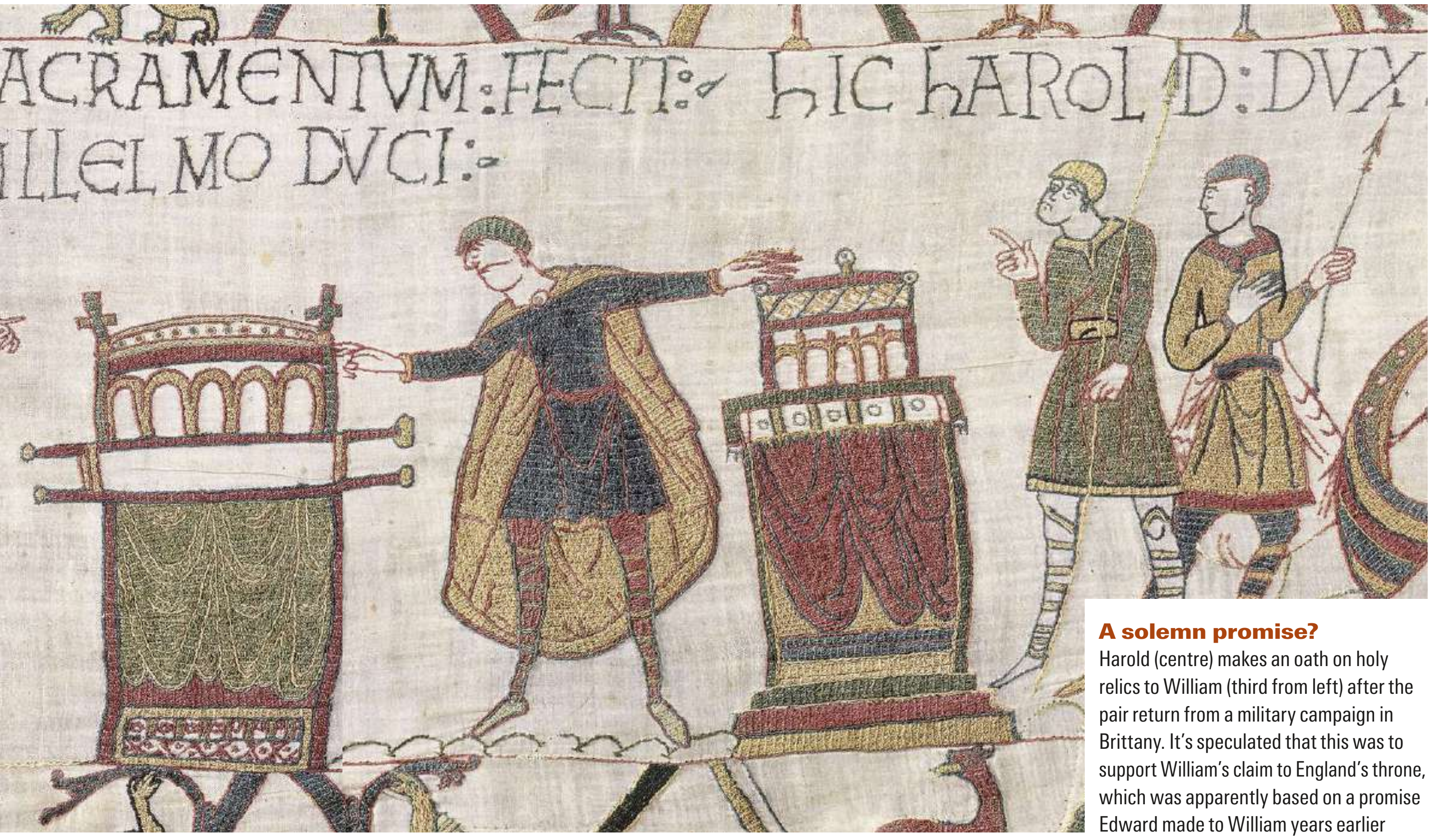
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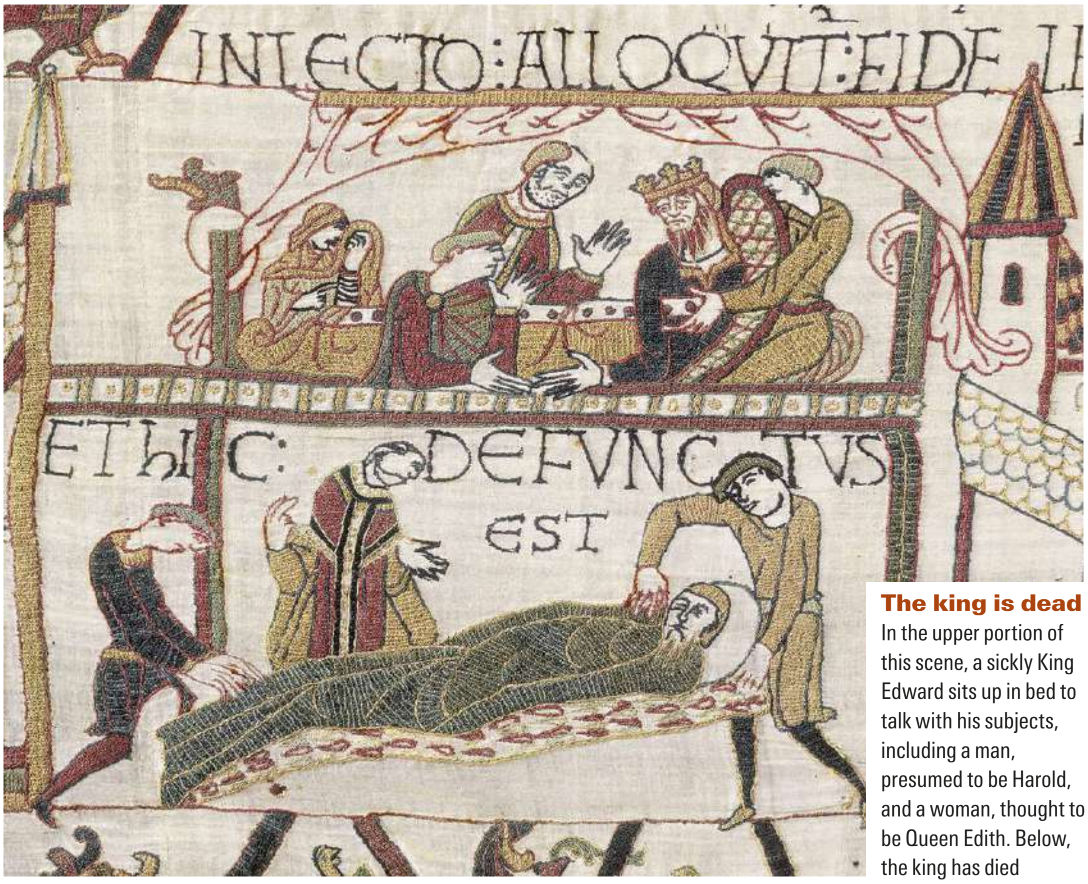
A solemn promise?
Harold (centre) makes an oath on holy relics to William (third from left) after the pair return from a military campaign in Brittany. It's speculated that this was to support William's claim to England's throne, which was apparently based on a promise Edward made to William years earlier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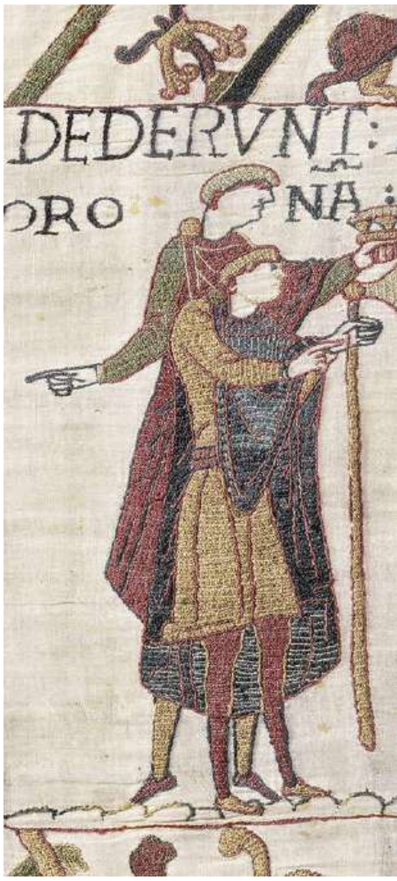
The king is dead
In the upper portion of this scene, a sickly King Edward sits up in bed to talk with his subjects, including a man, presumed to be Harold, and a woman, thought to be Queen Edith. Below, the king has died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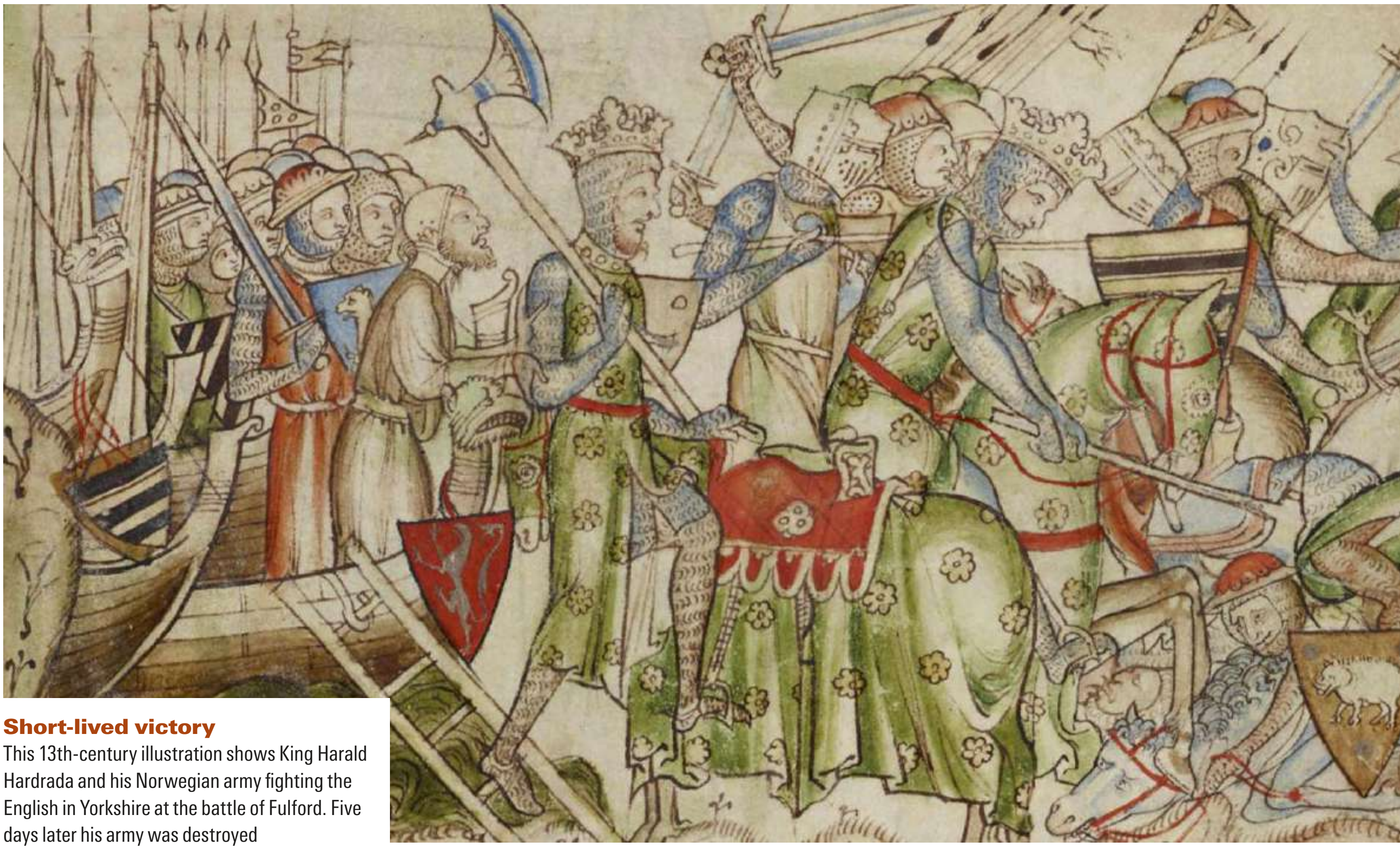
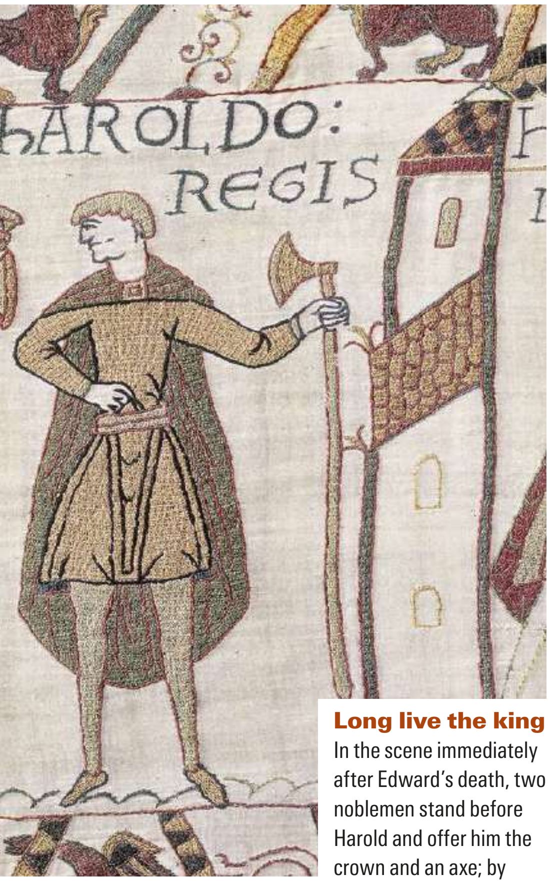


Short-lived victory
This 13th-century illustration shows King Harald Hardrada and his Norwegian army fighting the English in Yorkshire at the battle of Fulford. Five days later his army was destroyed



Long live the king In the scene immediately after Edward's death, two noblemen stand before Harold and offer him the crown and an axe; by taking these symbols of royal power, he will agree to become England's king. Famously, he accepted this proposal

BAYEUX MUSEUM /GETTY IMAGES

Edward Ætheling and his son, Edgar, were brought back to England from exile – probably not speaking a word of English

that Harold made to William; we see the oath performed, but we are not told any details.

What is not ambiguous in the narrative are the omissions. Anyone familiar with the drama of 1066 will know that we are missing a couple of key moments in the Tapestry's sketch of events. When Duke William landed at Pevensey on 28 September, King Harold was otherwise engaged in the north. He had recently fought another contender for his throne, the Norwegian king Harald Hardrada, who in alliance with Harold's own brother Earl Tostig, had already defeated one English army at the battle of Fulford on 20 September. Harold had then crushed Hardrada and Tostig five days later at the battle of Stamford Bridge; a great victory, but one later overshadowed by his own defeat at Hastings on 14 October.

Earl Tostig appears to have been a favourite of Edward the Confessor and was installed by the king as Earl of Northumbria by 1055. But his rule in the north was not a happy one. The inhabitants of Northumbria rebelled against him late in 1065, probably because he was trying to introduce new taxes – albeit ones similar to those in the south – highlighting the fact that though England was technically one realm, the north was semi-autonomous. In the recent past this had been the Danelaw – as the name implies, this was a large region of England that was under the jurisdiction of the Vikings. Harold had been tasked by King Edward to sort out the problem, but in the event sympathised with the rebels, or at least saw the logic of their cause, and Tostig was forced overseas. Tostig was clearly aggrieved, first setting out for the lands of his wife in Flanders, and then to the king of the Scots, before ending up joining the cause of Harald Hardrada – a legend in his own time as a fierce warrior and adventurer, and a man with his own (albeit loose) claim to the English throne.

Power hungry A c920 coin from the Danelaw, a large region of England which was controlled by the Vikings. Hardrada claimed England through this heritage

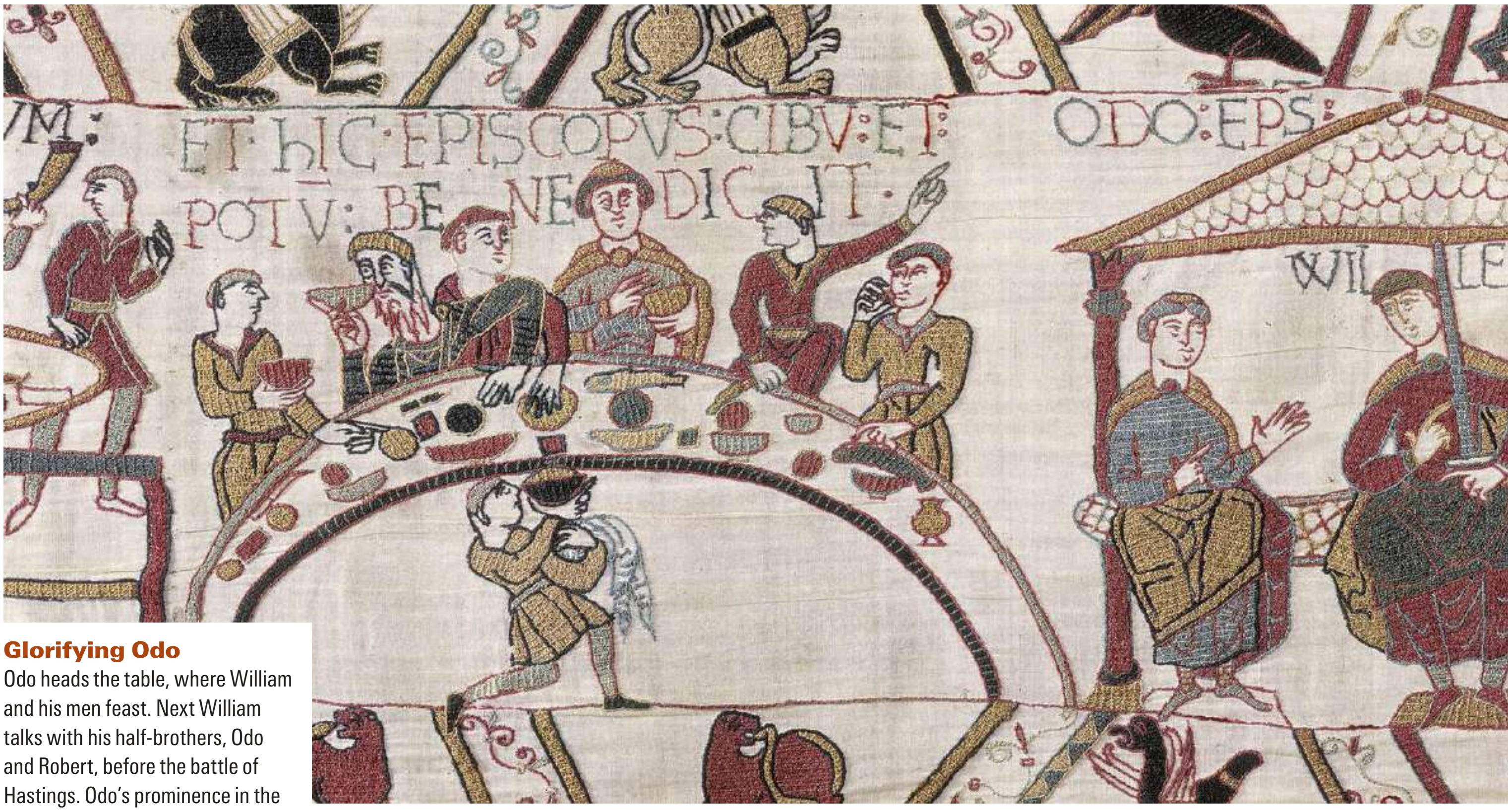
But none of this, or even Harold's long march down south to Hastings, is shown in the Bayeux Tapestry. It is understandable that these clashes do not figure in the embroidery since it is quite possible that the Normans simply weren't interested in these conflicts, but probably more importantly, it might not have suited the Norman narrative to have stressed the fact that the English were coming off the back of one hard fight and a long march before they faced William. Even though the way the battle of Hastings was fought depended on local men fighting locally, would Duke William have wanted it to be advertised – even within a textile narrative – that he had defeated a potentially depleted and tired enemy in his great victory? That aside, the inclusion of these battles would certainly have clouded the straight Harold v William narrative.

The exiled Ætheling

Fulford and Stamford Bridge are relatively well-known battles today, so they have not suffered from their exclusion in the Bayeux Tapestry. Yet there is one important 1066 figure who is missing from its narrative – *and* more generally from the wider understanding of the Conquest story. He is Edgar Ætheling, and we need a bit of context to introduce him.

A Norman king would not have been palatable to the English elite in 1066, many of whom, like Harold himself, were part Danish. England had after all been ruled by the Danes, under King Cnut, from 1016 until 1035, and thereafter his sons. So, as Edward's reign progressed, from 1042, the absence of an obvious heir (though married to Harold's sister, Edith, Edward had no children) would have caused disquiet among them. Indeed, by 1054 efforts were being made to seek out the kin of Edward's half-brother, King Edmund "Ironside", who had reigned briefly in 1016, before being defeated in battle by Cnut, the kingdom shared, and then – upon Edmund's death soon after – his family fleeing abroad.

In 1057 Prince Edward Ætheling, Edmund's son, was brought back to England from exile in Hungary – likely not speaking a word of English – and promptly died before even meeting King Edward, his half-uncle. Even so, foul play is not suspected. Fortunately, with Prince Edward came his son, Edgar, aged about five, who was – it seems – recognised as Ætheling (throne-worthy). The implication appears to be that King Edward brought him up as his eventual successor.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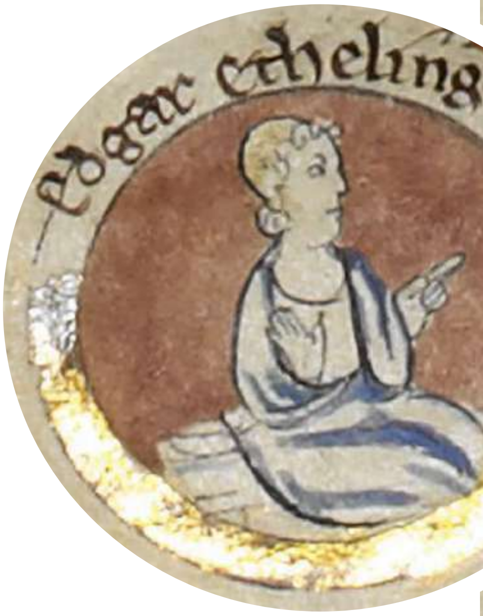
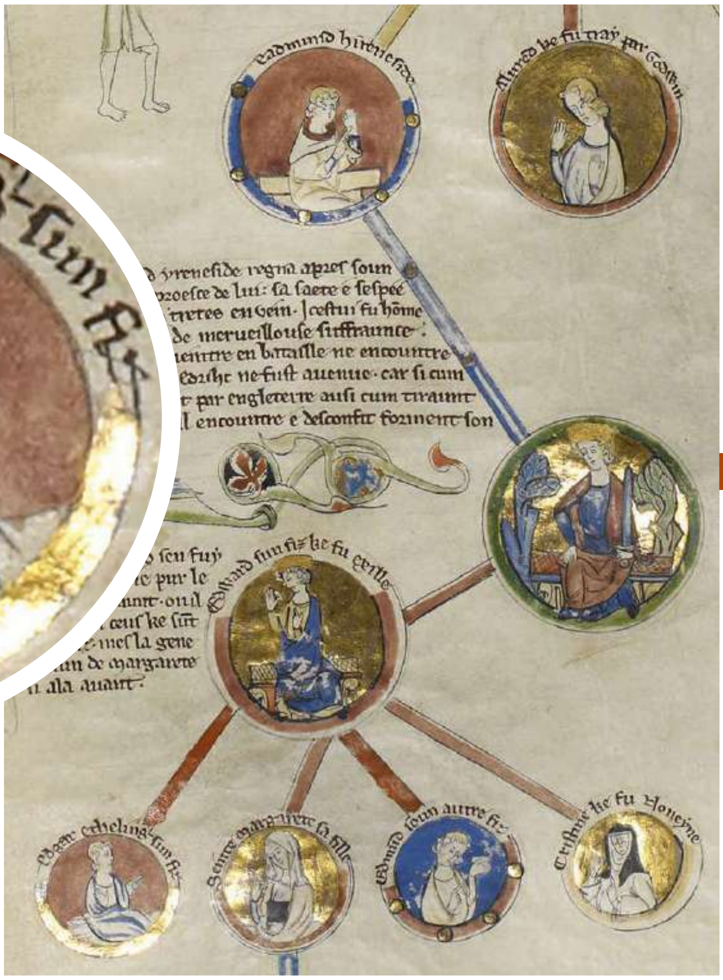
Glorifying Odo
Odo heads the table, where William and his men feast. Next William talks with his half-brothers, Odo and Robert, before the battle of Hastings. Odo's prominence in the Tapestry differs from written accounts of the Conquest, and is likely explained by his patronage of the embroidery


Edgar etheling fun fiz


Eadmund hirenside
Edward fun fiz ke fu exille
Edgar etheling fun fiz
Edmund soun autre fiz

Royal roots
Edgar Ætheling (shown in above cut-out) boasted an impressive lineage. The 13th-century genealogical roll on the right shows Edgar's grandfather, King Edmund "Ironside", who was Edward the Confessor's half-brother (top left); his father, Edward (centre left); and Edgar himself (bottom left) and his siblings

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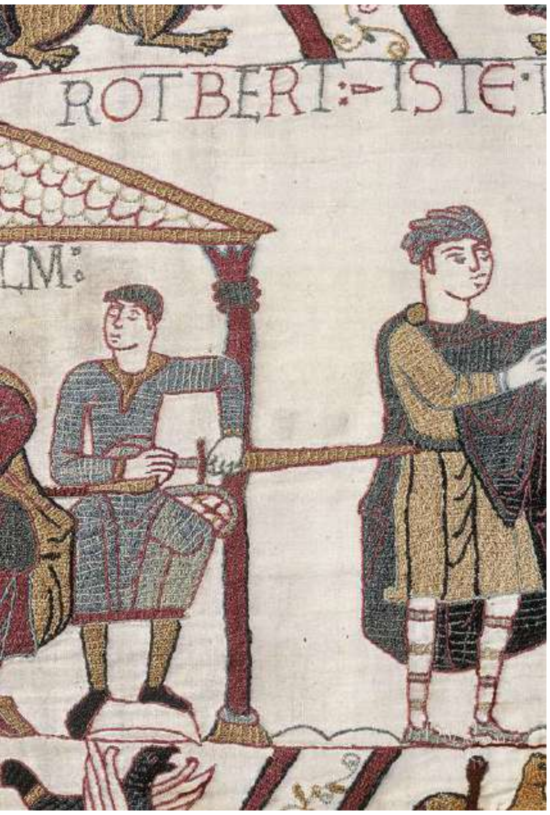
Tune in to our new HistoryExtra **podcast series on the Bayeux Tapestry**, which is set to be released in mid-February. To listen, visit *historyextra.com/bayeux-tapestry-podcast*

HistoryExtra
UNRAVELLING THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY



BAYEUX MUSEUM/BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

Edward and Edgar's backstory is not portrayed at all in the Bayeux Tapestry. All we see in the embroidery that alludes to it is the deathbed scene of the ailing king (see page 44) with the caption "Here King Edward in bed addresses his faithful friends", which shows Edward touching hands with a man we assume to be Earl Harold, as his wife (and Harold's sister) Queen Edith weeps at the bottom of his bed.

You could read this as showing King Edward, content that Edgar would succeed him as king, promising the "protection" of the kingdom to Earl Harold in line with the story in the roughly contemporary *Life of King Edward*, attributed to Edith's patronage, in which the king is said to say: "I commend this woman [Edith] and all the kingdom to your protection." Or you could take the view that this shows something more in accord with an account offered by the late 11th–early 12th-century historian Eadmer of Canterbury, who says Harold succeeded Edward "as he had before his death provided".

Whether regent or ruler, the Bayeux Tapestry next shows Harold being offered the crown by two men (see page 45), assumed to be members of the witan (council of ministers). He is then crowned, or at least anointed king. But Edgar is nowhere to be seen – he has been stitched out of the Tapestry altogether.

So, what do we make of this? It is possibly the case that Prince Edgar was seen as too young or otherwise unworthy. In January 1066, after the death of the old king, England was on the edge of a crisis. Whatever the nature of any promise to Duke William by King Edward in 1051, which might have been affirmed by Harold himself on the voyage to Normandy in 1064 (perhaps depicted in the Tapestry oath scene, shown on page 43), it was probably clear to most Englishmen that William would seek to claim the crown by force if he needed to. Furthermore, it was also well known that King Harald Hardrada, with or without Tostig, might try to take lands claimed through his Scandinavian roots in northern England.

So, invasion and war were on the cards – and was a teenage prince, brought up in Hungary, up to the task of saving England? It is easy to think not. But it is known that after King Harold's death at Hastings, and the advance of the Norman army north, the citizens of London chose Edgar as king (albeit a short-lived affair). So maybe Edgar was excluded from the Bayeux Tapestry for another reason – perhaps it was politically expedient to remove him.

Invasion and war were on the cards. Was a teenage prince, brought up in Hungary, up to the task of saving England?

Pulling the strings

It's helpful here to note who probably had the Bayeux Tapestry made. Bishop Odo of Bayeux, William's half-brother, plays an important role in the embroidery, both as an advisor and participant in the Hastings campaign. In the written sources, Odo is much less prominent than he appears in the Tapestry, and this is the most compelling of several reasons why Odo is seen as the most likely person to have been its patron. Though the actual needlework was likely done by English women working in Canterbury, it was probably carried out under Odo's orders or patronage, in part to glorify his role in proceedings, and in part to honour King William. It may well have been that the Bayeux Tapestry was actually made for the consecration of Odo's cathedral in Bayeux in 1077, though not necessarily for display.

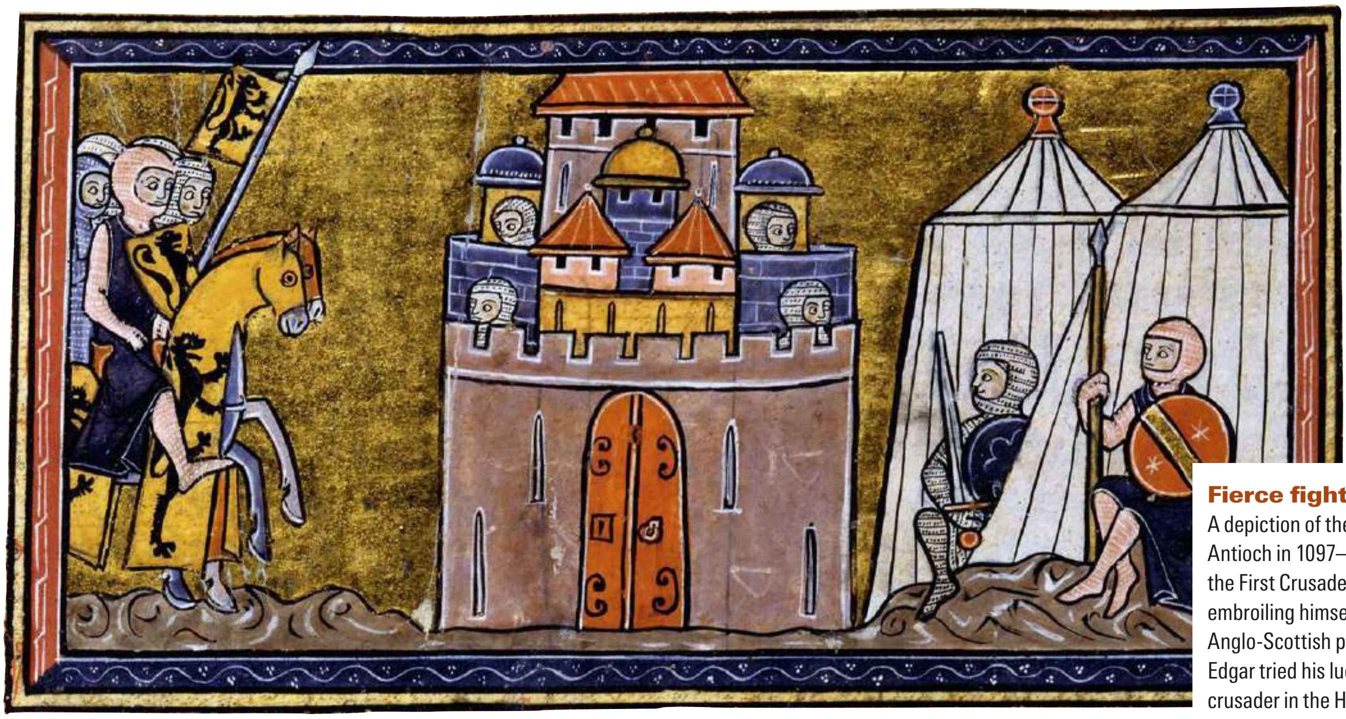
If the Bayeux Tapestry was to glorify Odo and his role in the Norman conquest, then it perhaps suited not to show Prince Edgar in his account. As stated before, the conflict between Harold and William is clearly set out as a binary one, and to add Edgar muddies the water and detracts from the key message. Any student of modern politics will tell you the importance of having one clear argument and sticking to it, whatever the reality of the situation on the ground. Duke William claimed the kingdom of England based on promises made both by Edward the Confessor and (perhaps) Harold himself, with the latter having perjured himself by going back on his oath to William and seizing the throne for himself. But if Edgar was actually supposed to be Edward's successor, then it is he who has been usurped. It would hardly have been politically expedient to have shown Edgar Ætheling having any place in the story.

The role of King Harold "Godwinson" in the Bayeux Tapestry is an interesting one. Certainly, there is no doubt he lost the conflict with William, but he is not shown as an anti-hero, or even a baddie. Indeed, the Tapestry takes care to show his status, religious devotion, strength and bravery. He does not run away from battle, but dies a hero's death, much like Beowulf or Byrhtnoth in earlier epic Anglo-Saxon poems.

However, our view of Harold might be somewhat different if Edgar was lurking in the shadows, reminding us that he was Edward's chosen heir, not Harold or William. Perhaps then it suited the patron and the designers of the Bayeux Tapestry to show a conflict between two men of immense quality, both believing they had a right to rule and both claiming it through King Edward, with their dispute ultimately being resolved by God's will. Including Edgar in the Bayeux Tapestry would have confused the message, but more than that (and here it doesn't matter who won) not allowed closure.

Commentators on the Bayeux Tapestry have remarked that it shows a narrative of the Norman conquest that suits a situation soon after 1066, when the Normans were trying to appease the English, not dominate them. But by 1069–70, when the north was harried, William's patience with the English had run dry. Perhaps that even explains why the embroidery was taken to Bayeux, as its version of the Conquest was no longer fashionable in England.

The Bayeux Tapestry is firmly rooted in the politics of the aftermath of the battle of Hastings, a time when Edgar wasn't a helpful



Fierce fighter
A depiction of the siege of Antioch in 1097–98, during the First Crusade. After embroiling himself in Anglo-Scottish politics, Edgar tried his luck as a crusader in the Holy Land

> It's not surprising that Edgar, a man of transient loyalties who might yet inspire English rebels, would be left out of the Tapestry

Comrades in arms
A wooden effigy of Robert Curthose, William the Conqueror's son and Edgar's firm friend. The pair apparently fought together against King Henry I of England

figure in a simple narrative. It's interesting to note that after the Conquest, Edgar did submit to William, in late 1066, and was seemingly accommodated with him briefly, before joining the northern rebellion against his rule in 1069–70. After a period in the court of King Malcolm III in Scotland, and then Flanders, he once more submitted to William and is recorded as being back in his court, where he became close friends with the king's son, Robert Curthose – himself a thorn in the Conqueror's side. Given that this is the period in which the Tapestry was likely being worked on, it's not surprising that a man of transient loyalties who might yet still form a focus for English rebels (though his leadership qualities seem to have been questionable) would not figure in the Norman-backed, though English worked, embroidery.

Left out of history

So Edgar is written out of the Bayeux Tapestry, and because of the Tapestry's general domination of the narrative even today, he does not take his place in the line-up of likely contenders for the English throne in the generally-known story of 1066. That is a shame, because his life is a fascinating one. There aren't many princes exiled to Hungary who make a claim on the English throne, then rebel against the incumbent and still survive to tell the tale. Only one in fact!

Remarkably, the story doesn't end there. After the death of William the Conqueror, Edgar gets further embroiled in Anglo-Scottish politics, inciting King Malcolm to invade England in 1091, and then in 1097 leading an English army into Scotland, with King William II's backing, and having his own nephew (his sister Margaret had married Malcolm in 1070) installed on the throne there. After that, he became a crusader and went to the Holy Land, returned via the Byzantine and German emperors, and finally in 1106 is recorded as fighting at the battle of Tinchebrai with his old friend Robert Curthose against King Henry I of England. It's not known for sure when or where he died, but he is recorded as still being alive in 1125 – long after Harold and William had died.

And yet, despite that exciting life of war, politics and intrigue, Edgar remains an elusive figure. He has an entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and one academic article from 1985 exploring his life, but aside from that, he doesn't get much attention. That's just one of the many legacies of the Bayeux Tapestry, a source that continues to dominate the narrative almost a millennium after it was stitched. And one that will certainly hit the headlines again if it travels back across the Channel in the next few years. Perhaps, then, Edgar's importance will finally be remembered.

Michael Lewis is head of portable antiquities and treasure at the British Museum, and an expert on the Bayeux Tapestry.
David Musgrove is *BBC History Magazine's* content director and a doctor of medieval archaeology. *The Story of the Bayeux Tapestry: Unravelling the Norman Conquest*, by David Musgrove and Michael Lewis, is set to be published on 1 April by Thames and Hudson

LISTEN Tune in to this episode of **Anglo-Saxon Portraits** about the Bayeux Tapestry
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Vikings under

the microscope

Advances in science have transformed our understanding of the Viking Age. **Cat Jarman** reveals how techniques such as high-resolution imaging, DNA studies and isotope analysis have given us new insights into six areas of Viking life – from the genetic make-up of their armies to the secrets of their vast wealth

1 The push and pull of migration

The chemical signatures of bones and teeth suggest that Viking settlements were a melting pot of ethnicities

We have always known that travel and exploration was a key feature of the Viking Age, with the Vikings reaching as far as North America in the west, Morocco in the south, and Baghdad in the east. However, it is often thought that the movement was almost exclusively *out* of Scandinavia, with many returning home again afterwards. Now, new evidence is painting a different picture.

In a recent, large-scale ancient DNA study, a team from Copenhagen analysed burials from across the Viking world in a bid to find out more about population movement. As well as discovering evidence for migration out of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, the team also found evidence of many moving *into* Scandinavia – and from some unexpected locations, such as southern Europe. This should probably not come as a complete surprise; after all, the Vikings had extensive contact with Byzantium and even the Middle East through the river networks of eastern Europe.

The team also found that island locations in the Baltic Sea, like Gotland, showed high levels of genetic diversity. Again, this makes sense, as these places were hotspots for international trade.

What is difficult to know is exactly how and when these genetic interactions took place. DNA only gives you an idea of ancestry, not personal travel histories.

But another scientific technique – isotope analysis – can shed a little light on the lives of first-generation migrants. Because we quite literally are what we eat, traces of the underlying geology from the soils our food was grown in, and the areas where our drinking water fell as rain, are preserved as chemical signatures in our teeth and bones.

Evidence from likely Viking raiding parties in England – and from what was probably the army of Harald "Bluetooth" Gormsson, king of Norway and Denmark, in Trelleborg on the southern tip of Sweden – show that the groups were made up of individuals from a large range of geographical origins. A mass grave in Weymouth, for instance, included individuals who may have grown up in the Arctic and maybe even Poland. Similarly, in the cemeteries of the Viking town of Birka (in Sweden), researchers found a number of migrants, suggesting it was a multi-ethnic settlement fitting its status as an important trading centre.

A ring bearing an Islamic inscription, found in a grave in Birka, Sweden. Viking settlements were made up of goods – and people – from a wide range of geographical origins

STATENS HISTORIKA MUSEUM/ALAMY

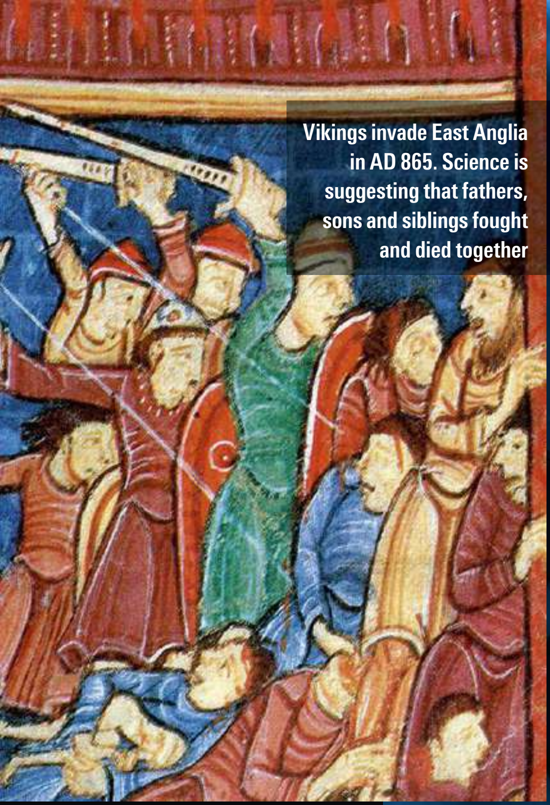
2 Brothers in arms

DNA analysis of Viking burials has revealed that raiding truly was a family business

The Icelandic sagas are filled with tales of relatives fighting together abroad, like the legendary Ragnar Lothbrok and his sons, who, so the story goes, wreaked havoc on ninth-century England. But up until now, we haven't had a great deal of evidence for how much of this was really true. Although we still can't corroborate the exploits of Ragnar, recent advances in ancient DNA have confirmed one thing: Viking raids really were family affairs.

In the 1970s, in the Derbyshire village of Repton, archaeologists excavated what is possibly England's best-known Viking burial. Here, a ninth-century grave next to St Wystan's Church – once the most sacred burial place of the Mercian royal family – contained the bodies of two men, side by side. The eldest of the two, dubbed the Repton warrior, was buried with a Thor's hammer pendant around his neck, and a sword by his side.

Catastrophic injuries showed that the Repton warrior met a particularly violent end, including a cut to his femur that likely severed his penis. He was buried with a boar's tusk in its place, presumably to replace what he had lost for the afterlife. Next to him lay the body of a younger man, also with traumatic injuries, but with



Vikings invade East Anglia in AD 865. Science is suggesting that fathers, sons and siblings fought and died together

few grave goods. Their graves were covered with broken and desecrated stone from what was once a beautifully carved Christian cross.

For a while, it was thought the younger man was the warrior's weapon bearer, perhaps killed to serve his master in the afterlife. Now, a new ancient DNA study has revealed that the two were, in fact, first-degree relatives – most likely father and son. It is possible that the two were leaders of the notorious Great Army that terrorised England in the 860s and 870s.

Even more spectacular proof for relatives raiding together is provided by a ship grave from Salme in Estonia, dating to 750 – right at the cusp of the Viking Age. During road works, two ships were discovered and found to contain 41 bodies interred within the hulls, which had been dragged ashore and buried. Most of the individuals – all men – had been stacked in layers in the larger ship, surrounded by lavish grave goods: decorated weapons, gaming pieces and sacrificed animals.

Traumatic injuries and arrow heads still lodged in the ship's timbers suggested that this was the result of an unsuccessful mission or raid. Both the artefact types and isotope analysis of the dead men's teeth indicated that they grew up in central Sweden. And, when a team from Copenhagen analysed their DNA, it was revealed that four of the men, who were buried side by side, were brothers.

NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE RESEARCH/AKG

3

Location, location, location

Elite Vikings went to great lengths to stake their claim to territory, as high-resolution laser imaging has proved

Political power has, for much of history, been inextricably linked to the acquisition of land – and the Viking Age was no different. Across Scandinavia, the land was manipulated with fortifications, to keep enemies out and resources in. Meanwhile, burial mounds were used to assert landownership and proclaim links with a powerful ancestor.

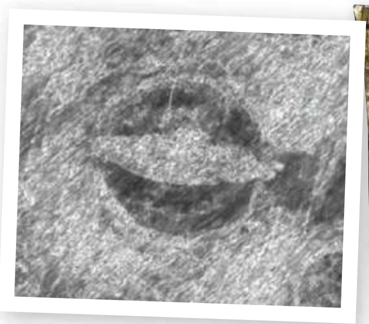
In 2014, a ringfort was discovered on the Danish island of Zealand, south of Copenhagen. The fortress, named Borgring, came to light thanks to a method called Lidar: high-resolution laser imaging through aerial photography, which gives us an exceptionally detailed view of the landscape and its topography.

When archaeologists Søren Sindbæk and Nanna Holm investigated Lidar imagery of the region, they spotted a circle with a diameter of 144 metres. (On the ground, the shape could barely be made out, with only a slight difference in height.) What they had found turned out to date to the 970s or 980s, and belonged to a network of fortifications built by Harald Bluetooth. The discovery at Borgring suggests that Viking Age military networks were better organised and more effective than previously thought, and that Harald exerted even stronger control over the local landscape.

Another example of how political power was expressed through the possession of territory was provided by a find announced in Norway in 2018. Geophysicists working at Gjellestad in the south-eastern part of the country discovered a completely unknown Viking ship burial that could be seen with striking clarity. The images produced by their ground-penetrating radar (GPR) showed the remains of a circular mound with the perfect outline of a ship's hull in its centre.

Other, older burial mounds were known from the area, but the one covering the ship had been removed by ploughing. The GPR survey also identified several smaller mounds nearby, as well as longhouses, including at least one large hall. A few hundred metres away, metal detector searches revealed evidence for a trading site. It's thought the complex formed part of a so-called central place, which may have had sacred and political functions.

Previously, little was known about this part of Norway in the Viking Age, and it was thought that all the political power was focused on the western part of the Oslofjord, where the famous Oseberg and Gokstad ships were found. As the site begins to be properly investigated, this now needs to be seriously reassessed.



RIGHT: **Harald "Bluetooth", who built an impressive network of fortifications, one of which was discovered in 2014**
ABOVE: **A georadar survey reveals the Gjellestad ship in 2018**

4

Women on the move

Science has exploded the notion that wives, mothers and daughters were bystanders in the great Viking migrations

Tales of the Vikings have traditionally revolved around the men who embarked on daring journeys – and carried out atrocities – abroad. Women, on the other hand, are often thought of as mere onlookers, waiting patiently at home in charge of the family farm until their husbands and fathers returned bearing the spoils of war. The frequent foreign and exotic artefacts found in women's graves have almost exclusively been interpreted as gifts. But new evidence is beginning to challenge this.

Isotope analysis now shows that women travelled, too, both within Scandinavia and elsewhere in Europe. At Adwick-le-Street in South Yorkshire, isotope evidence revealed that a woman buried with Scandinavian-style brooches likely grew up in western Norway.

At the 873 Great Army winter camp at Repton, a mass burial thought to contain war dead also contained several women. These were originally believed to have been the local wives or even slaves of the Scandinavian men. But here, too, the isotope evidence revealed that several of them may well have grown up in Scandinavia.

It is now clear that women played a significant part in the population dynamics of the Viking Age. However, we still don't know exactly what their roles were. While many of those women buried abroad may have been peaceful migrants, one particular burial from Sweden has suggested that this may not have been the case for all of them.

In 2017, a team of researchers announced the results of a new ancient DNA study of one of the most spectacular warrior graves from the Viking town of Birka near Stockholm. The chamber grave (number Bj 581) contained a single body with an extensive set of weapons and the remains of two horses – one of them fully equipped, as if ready to ride into battle. But what made the DNA study especially surprising was the fact that it revealed that this individual – usually thought to be the archetypal, Viking warrior – was genetically female.

The findings created quite a stir because fighting women are often thought to be confined to mythology. Some still doubt the interpretation of Bj 581, noting that, although genetically female, the warrior may have considered themselves male (ie, they were transgender). Others have pointed out that, although she was buried with weapons, that is not enough in itself to confirm she was a warrior. Still, someone went to a lot of trouble to present her as one in death. This, combined with the knowledge that women also took part in movements in and out of Scandinavia, suggests that perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by the contents of Bj 581 after all.

Isotope analysis has revealed that this brooch – found in a grave at Adwick-le-Street, near Doncaster – was worn by a woman raised in Norway in the ninth century

This 10th-century hoard containing 19 dirhams (silver coins from the Islamic emirates of central Asia) was discovered on the Isle of Skye. The trade in such coins accelerated the growth of Viking wealth

NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES/NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND

5

Precious metals

Silver sourced from trade networks stretching far into the east was a cornerstone of Viking prosperity

International trading networks were a highly important part of the Vikings' success. Objects such as beads and silk from as far afield as Byzantium and the Middle East found their way to Scandinavia, while Islamic silver coins were imported in vast quantities. In fact, a hunger for this precious metal fuelled much of the Viking Age trade.

Now, researchers at the University of Oxford have begun to investigate the source of silver ingots – metal bars made from melted down coins and objects – to find out just how extensive this trade really was. Jane Kershaw, the archaeologist who leads the project, investigated chemical signatures and trace elements specific to metal ores from different geographical regions in ingots from Viking hoards found in Britain. Her team discovered that the main source of silver was eastern territories and, specifically, melted-down dirhams. This means that we could have seriously underestimated the amount of silver that came directly from eastern spheres.

6

International killers

Did increased globalisation supercharge the spread of lethal viruses in the Viking Age?

Smallpox was a killer in Viking communities, as evidenced by this 1,200-year-old skeleton, found in Öland, Sweden

THE NATIONAL SWEDISH HERITAGE BOARD/AKG

In 2020, a team of geneticists revealed that they had discovered the earliest ever evidence of smallpox in ancient skeletons. The geneticists analysed the DNA of 1,800 individuals – some born comparatively recently; some as far back as 31,000 years ago – and found that 13 people had died with the variola virus, which causes smallpox, in their bodies.

Amazingly, apart from two that date to the 19th century, all the skeletons were from burials at sites associated with the Vikings in Scandinavia, England and Russia – including one from a possible execution grave at St John's College, Oxford. The findings suggest that the widespread mobility of the Viking Age could have been an important factor in explaining the spread of the virus.

This discovery isn't the first time a deadly pathogen has been linked to Viking migrations. A few years earlier, researchers found that a particular strain of leprosy had travelled to Ireland and England from Scandinavia, putting the blame, again, on the Vikings. The researchers proposed that the disease spread because of the trade in squirrel fur – an important commodity that was shipped over long distances.

It is possible that the smallpox virus spread for similar reasons. The transmission of such diseases may have been one of the more unexpected, and less desirable, effects of the increased globalisation and extensive travel carried out by the Vikings.

Cat Jarman's latest book, *River Kings: A New History of the Vikings from Scandinavia to the Silk Roads*, is published by HarperCollins in February. She will be discussing the Vikings on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

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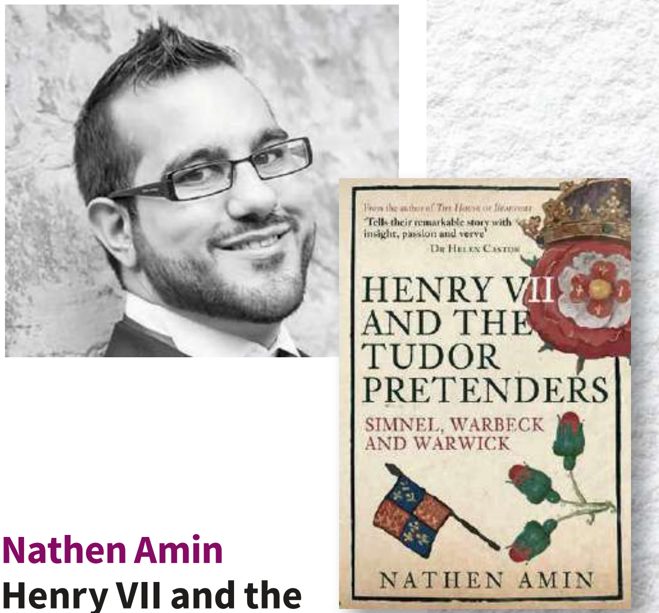
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BRIDGEMAN

Why history must take a stance

Historians are often condemned for acting as judge and jury, but remaining neutral about our ancestors' behaviour is neither possible, nor desirable

BY **DONALD BLOXHAM**

In 2013, as preparations to commemorate the First World War centenary picked up pace, Max Hastings trained his sights on the UK government. The popular historian chastised politicians for their reticence on "the virtue of Britain's cause, or the blame that chiefly attaches to Germany for the catastrophe that overtook Europe". The government "calls this a 'non-judgmental' approach," Hastings declared. "The rest of us might call it a cop-out."

Not all historians would have agreed with Hastings' scathing verdict on the government's quest for neutrality. In fact, many abhor attributing blame in their work. The famous French historian Marc Bloch declared that "the historian's sole duty is to understand", not "pass judgment". Judgment was akin to a chemist preposterously separating "the bad gases, like chlorine, from the good ones like oxygen".

More recently, Richard J Evans wrote: "The historian's job is to explain; it is for others to judge." As with philosopher Michael Oakeshott's ban on treating the past as "a field in which we exercise our moral and political opinions, like whippets in a meadow on a Sunday afternoon", moral judgments seem to have the bad odour of advocacy or propaganda.

In my recent book, *History and Morality*, I lay out a different position. My argument is that, where it matters, it is impossible to remove judgments from historical accounts. Historians need to recognise this, take responsibility for their judgments, and judge consistently.

In the explanation of human affairs, rather than in the chemistry lab, accounts of how and why something happened can't easily be separated from notions of responsibility and the existence or otherwise of justification. When explaining the causes of the First World War – as with so many other historical events – *whodunit?* is a question about cause and guilt together, given the negative attitudes to what followed. But, equally, allocating responsibility for historical events can be a form of praise, as when we talk about "peacemakers", for example.

Let's also consider revolutions, which are surely some of history's most contested battlegrounds. When we describe these events, we tend to factor in the strength of revolutionary grievances, the regime's willingness to address these grievances, the proportionality of grievances to the violence of revolutionary action, the nature of revolutionaries' actions to secure the goals of the revolution, and so on. These discussions are laden with concern about costs and benefits to people and society. And while ideas of what constitutes "acceptable" costs and benefits will vary, this only means that judgments will vary, not that judgments can be removed.

> **"It is impossible to remove judgments from historical accounts. Historians need to recognise this, take responsibility for their judgments, and judge consistently**

It is, of course, easy to caricature historical evaluations – and some demand caricature. Henry Steele Commager enjoined his fellow historians to "refrain from the folly and vanity of moral righteousness about the past"; Richard J Evans has warned against "denunciations" and "expressions of moral outrage"; while the medievalist David Knowles wrote that the "historian is not a judge, still less a hanging judge". Some have pictured historians acting like judges or like deities (Bloch mocked them as imitating "Minos or Osiris" behind their desks), working themselves into a lather and shouting words of damnation. But taking a moral stance doesn't need to be expressed like this.

Moral evaluation can be understated, qualified, or implicit – and positive as well as negative, as with the "peacemakers" I mentioned earlier. Furthermore, rather than occurring summarily at the end of the account, as the jury pronounces, evaluative elements can infuse historical accounts throughout.

The language that historians use to characterise acts, motives, policies, social arrangements etc is often evocative, reflecting or prompting evaluations. Words like "theft", "uncharitable", "corrupt", "brave", "generous", "deceitful", "venal", "kind" or "racist" at once describe, evoke and evaluate. To describe some text as anti-Semitic is to convey its attitude towards Jews, but no one is neutral in regards to anti-Semitism (anti-Semites included). There are words that *can't* be impartial. To describe a state as totalitarian may be empirically justified but the concept of "totalitarianism" is freighted with implications – generally negative – that go beyond the purely analytical. The key question here is not whether the historian's wording implies or evokes judgment, but whether the wording is a reasonable inference from the evidence available.

And when historians insist on neutrality, what exactly do they mean? To venture into a different arena, is the "neutral" sports fan the one who does not care which team wins, the one who thinks the idea of caring who wins is a mistake, or the one who wants the better team to win based on criteria and evidence of superiority? More to the point, is it even possible to be "neutral" about non-neutral phenomena?

DUCE
LA FORESTAL
LUCE

Loaded language
Italian soldiers raise their daggers in front of a portrait of Fascist leader Benito Mussolini, Liguria, 1940. "To describe a state as totalitarian may be empirically justified but the concept of 'totalitarianism' is freighted with implications," writes Donald Bloxham

Apportioning blame
German soldiers on their way to the front.
A century later, Max Hastings railed against the UK government's attempt to apply a "non-judgmental" approach to the causes of the First World War

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Refusing to take sides
The French academic Marc Bloch mocked historians' attempts to pass judgment on the events they described

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Sinister neutrality Enslaved people in South Carolina. In the American south, slavery has long been described as "warranteeism" or "patriarchalism" – an example, argues Donald Bloxham, of neutral terms being deployed to deliberately mislead

Of course some historical phenomena are morally neutral (by past as well as present standards). If I was researching the statistics of the herring trade in the Hebrides in the 17th century, I could perhaps deal with that in a way that was purely neutral. But it seems impossible, and undesirable, to create a morally neutral history regarding events where people are suffering or inflicting pain on others.

The adoption of neutral terms in these contexts can be deliberately misleading. For example, as the writer Britni Danielle has highlighted, a recent textbook for Texas's social studies curriculum dubbed enslaved Africans as "workers", reflecting a tradition in the American south of labelling slavery with euphemisms like "warranteeism" or "patriarchalism".

Danielle also raises the case of the third US president, Thomas Jefferson, and Sally Hemings, the enslaved woman he owned and with whom he had a longstanding sexual relationship. In this instance, the issue is not pseudo-neutrality but rather the question of positive versus negative evaluations. Hemings is frequently described in romanticising terms as Jefferson's "mistress", which obscures the fact that she was his property to do with as he wished, sexually and otherwise.

At the other end of the scale from individual word choices, a work of history gives an overall impression and this can be a moral impression. That can be a product of the explicit argument as, say, when a historian of empire sets out to marshal evidence in support of the case that the project was after all driven by good intentions rather than selfishness. It can also be a product of accumulated descriptions and explanations of historical outcomes, causes, intentions, experiences, and so forth.

The 20th-century British historian Herbert Butterfield once wrote that "historical explaining does not condemn; neither does it excuse… it is neither more nor less than the process of seeing things in their context". And context is crucial in this discussion. Understanding different circumstances and ways of life is one of the historian's chief virtues, and a guard against anachronism.

However, all that varies with historical context is the *content* of standards – not whether they exist or not. The common refrain that we should take historical actors on their own terms is actually imbued with a moral philosophy – call it moral contextualism. The logic of the position is that one judges in accordance with the appropriate standards, not that one does not judge. Concluding that power was wielded legitimately or illegitimately according to the standards of a past time is just to imply a judgment relative to those standards. So long as we understand the different social expectations and values, we are equipped and entitled to describe the Homeric Greek warrior's shying from battle as "cowardly", just as we might criticise someone who fails to defend a junior work colleague against a bullying line-manager.

One implication of moral contextualism is that it would be bizarre to criticise people in the past for failing to act in accordance with 21st-century norms. I agree with this. But there is more to say on the matter. Moral contextualism produces a form of "internal" evaluation, working only in relation to the menu of options available to historical actors. However we can also make "external" judgments, which have a different character and focus.

One reason we tend to make external judgments is that, whether we are looking at bygone worlds or the diverse worlds of today, our evaluations are not just linked to actors' motives and justifications but to outcomes. In the past (as now) those outcomes included harmful or helpful effects on other people – sometimes, of course, people who did not share the values of the actors who caused the effects. So we need to distinguish between the dubious practice of telling dead people that they should have thought differently, and the practice of external judgment, which involves evaluating particular practices in the past and the values that mandated those practices.

> **"Relativism proposes a universal moral standard about the wrongness of judging across group boundaries, while denying the existence of such universal standards**

This idea of evaluating practices and values in foreign countries, or ones in the past, also raises the question of moral relativism. But I believe this is a non-problem. Relativisms tend to begin with the claim that value-systems are diverse, being created within different human groups with different ways of justifying the good and the right, rather than being given to all people by a deity or found woven into the objective fabric of the world. One form of relativism goes on to say that it is wrong to judge the values of other groups – but this argument actually undermines itself. It proposes a group-transcending, universal moral standard about the wrongness of judging across group boundaries, while denying the existence of such group-transcending moral standards.

The strongest variety of relativism claims that it is impossible to objectively establish the superiority of one moral system over others. Whatever the strengths of this sort of relativism, it is not relevant to this discussion. It does not constitute a case against judging across the borders of foreign countries – it would only deny that such judgments would be compelling to those whose practices are being judged. And indeed such judgments can be unavoidable.

To dig a little further into this matter, let's say that in my research I encounter some practice that seems to bring happiness or suffering to some member or members of a past society. My immediate reaction is to think how pleasant or unpleasant it seems. Anyone who tells me I ought not have that initial gut reaction is whistling in the wind.

What if I choose not to make a more careful judgment? In that case my understanding would not be improved by contextualisation of the foreign practice, comprehension of its social function, or the attitudes of various parties to it. My gut reaction will remain, unadulterated. And that gut reaction will continue to shape my opinion of the past practices. It is still a judgment.

But what if I allow myself to think further about it but not make a final evaluation? This will not work either. Even without making a formal verdict, my greater understanding will either reverse, negate, dilute, or reinforce my gut reaction. Crucially, I am still forming a view of the past practice – and that produces a judgment.

In all three scenarios, judgment exists. The question is how I convey this to my audience. And this is where the content and organisation of my historical account is crucial.

Earlier in this piece I mentioned how a historical work can provide an overall moral impression. In their writing, historians regularly "go behind" the outlooks of historical figures, contextualising in ways that might not have been familiar to them, as well as introducing other voices to the scenario being examined. Historians of Hitler, for instance, do not just reproduce, far less adopt, the views expressed in *Mein Kampf*. Rather, they explain what personal experiences and cultural tendencies led Hitler to hold these views.

Equally, as historians explain the significance or consequences of what people did, they may harness the perspectives of people affected by those actions, or provide additional descriptions of these events. Think how strange it would be to "see" Stalin's attack on "Kulaks" (the comparatively wealthy peasants who suffered greatly under his rule) solely through his eyes. And there is no reason that these other perspectives would align with the outlook of the people instigating the events – consider the different views and experiences of slaves and slaveholders, for example. If historians' own accounts of actions and effects do end up reflecting the values of the instigators, that tells us more about the historians than about "proper" historical procedure.

"When different histories give greater emphasis to this or that element, the result is to create differing moral impressions, not to render the impression neutral

Different works of history will give greater emphasis to this or that element, or exclude certain elements altogether, but the result will be to create differing moral impressions, not to render the impression neutral. It is also no good historians washing their hands and saying readers can make up their own minds about the moral aspect, as if unprompted. Historians need to take responsibility for their prompts – their choices of words, examples, perspectives, and so on – which means in the first instance acknowledging that they are providing these prompts.

Lifting spirits Newly elected South African president Nelson Mandela (right) and his predecessor FW de Klerk raise their hands aloft in 1994. Moral evaluation can be positive as well as negative

There are some historical evaluations, while intrinsically no more political than others, which have particular political ramifications because of the relationship between the past and the present. If the past is a foreign country, some parts are less foreign than others, as Max Hastings intimated. When criticising the government for its "cop-out" over 1914, Hastings also wrote: "That Britain sacrificed three-quarters of a million lives to prevent the triumph of Germany's militarists should be a matter of profound pride to those men's modern descendants."

Britain, as Hastings puts it, transcends the generations. Our fortunes in the present are influenced by the past and our identity is shaped by how we perceive that past. If we adopt the idea of a national community as an "imagined community", because most of its members never meet each other across space yet still believe they have something in common, the same can apply across time.

So if pride is considered a reasonable or desirable response to certain episodes in the past, then shame about certain episodes cannot be dismissed as anachronistic; we must be consistent.

We are all familiar with arguments over whether given episodes ought to be a source of pride or shame – empire currently being the most obvious topic of debate in the UK. Whatever historians think about people having these feelings towards their nation's past, the fact is that such attitudes will continue to exist. Works of history can only influence the choice and strength of these attitudes – they can't erase them altogether.

Perhaps, then, instead of maintaining a specious neutrality towards the past, historians should pass judgment without fear or favour in the present. H

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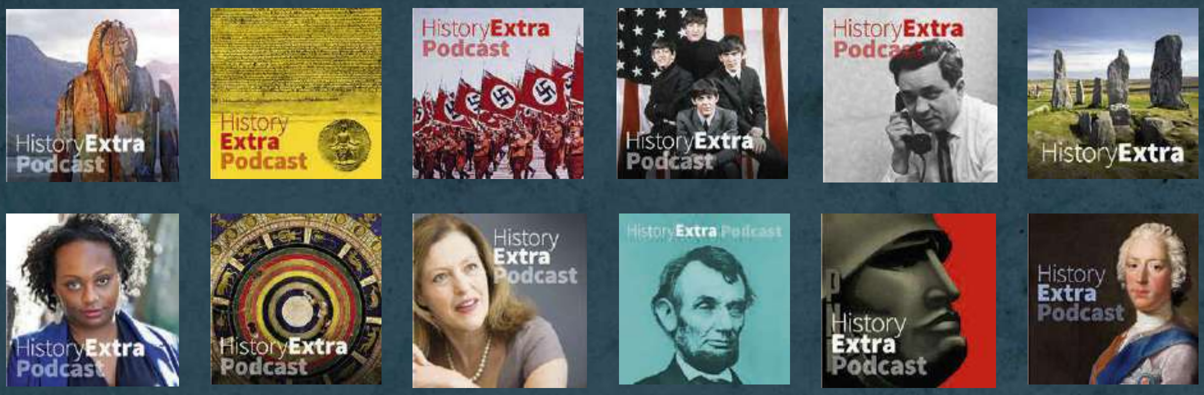
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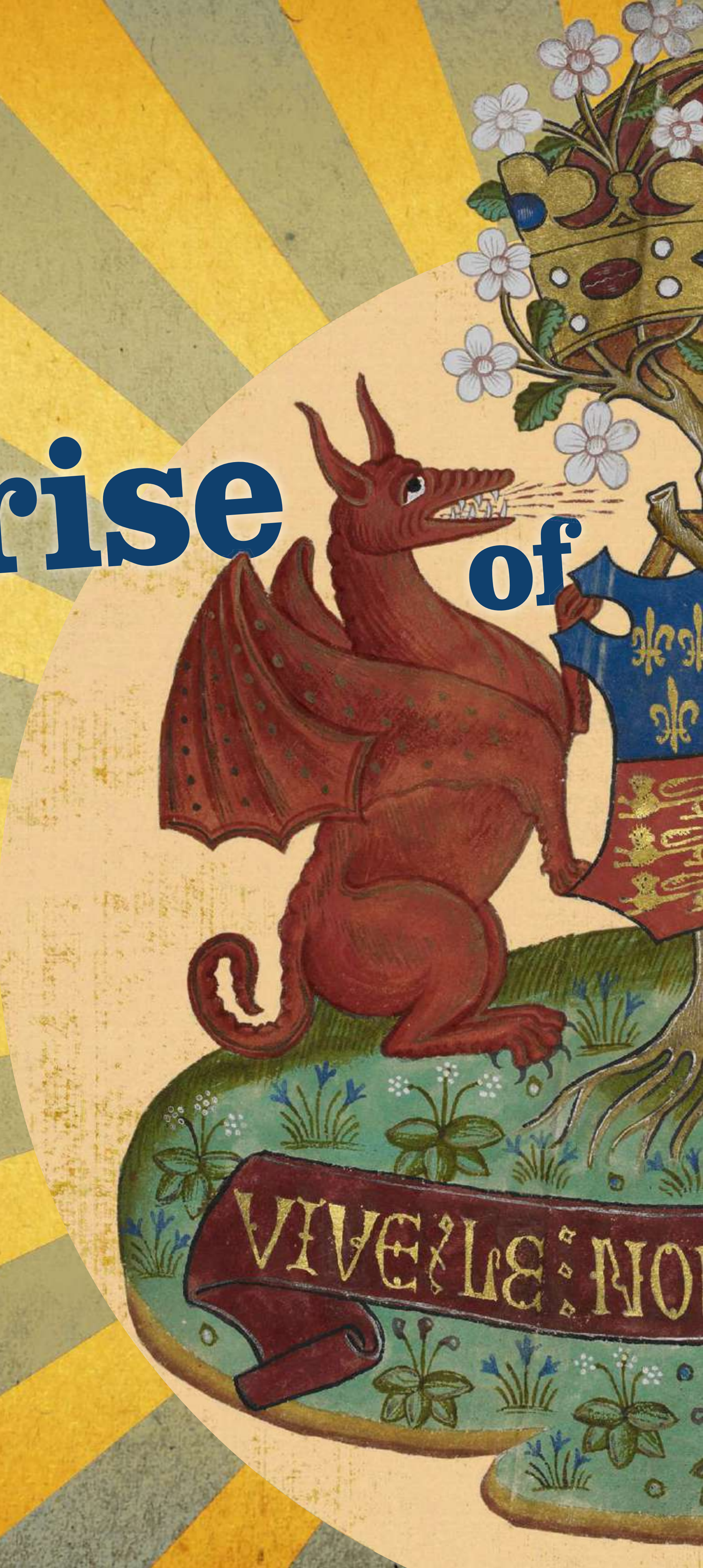
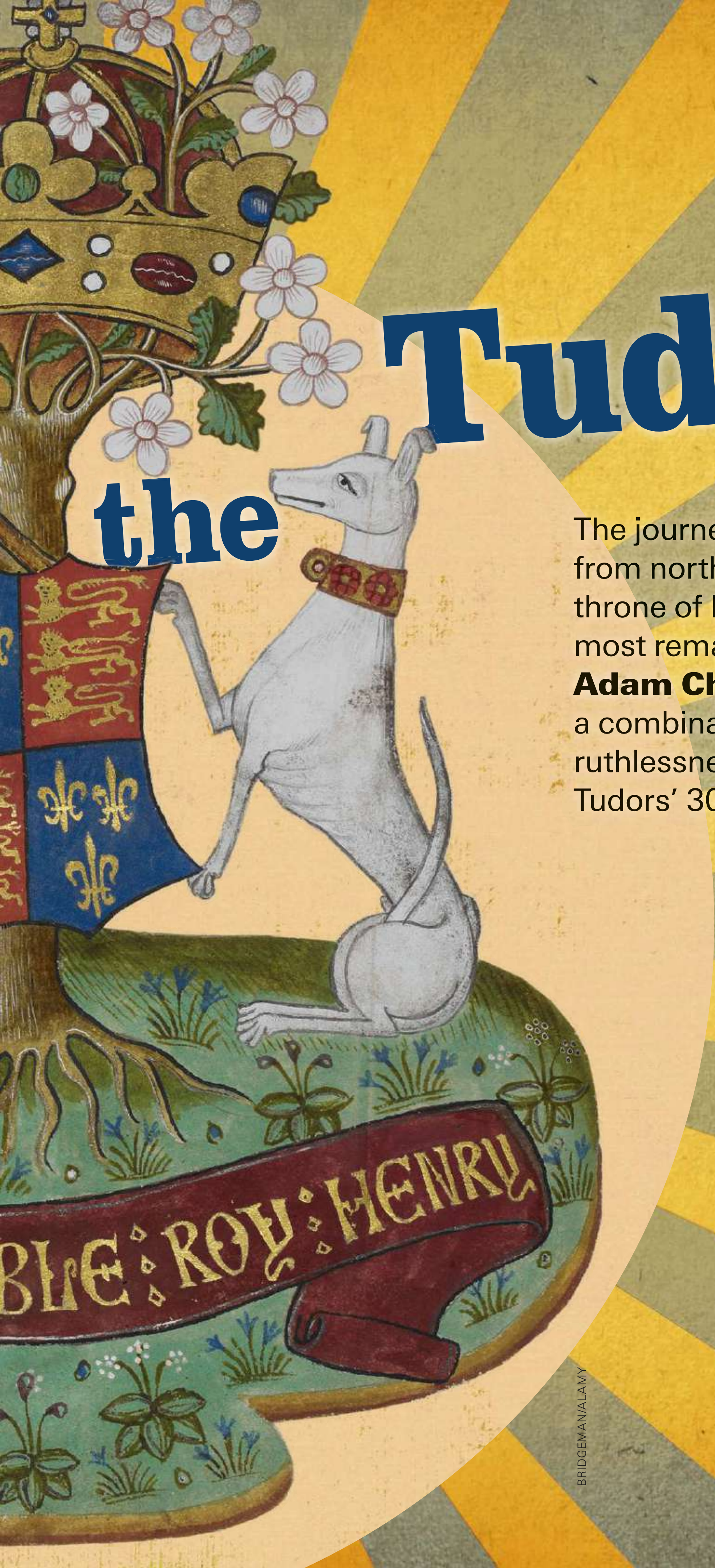
The rise of



The royal arms of Henry VII, which feature a red dragon (symbol of Cadwaladr, king of Gwynedd) and white greyhound (often associated with the earldom of Richmond). Henry's Welsh and English ancestry both played a role in his rise to power in the 1480s

the Tudors

The journey of a little-known family from north-west Wales to the throne of England is one of the most remarkable in British history. **Adam Chapman** reveals how a combination of luck, guile and ruthlessness supercharged the Tudors' 300-year rise to power



BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

It's one of English history's great turning points. When Henry VII defeated Richard III at the battle of Bosworth, he not only wrested the crown from a ruling king but – in the eyes of several historians – he brought down the curtain on an entire era.

Whether Richard III's death that day in August 1485 really did signal the end of the Middle Ages is up for debate. But one thing's for certain – and that's that it ushered in the age of the Tudors. With Henry VII on the throne, the stage was now set for one of the most controversial and romanticised royal dynasties of them all – presided over by such irresistible figures as Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

Yet every bit as remarkable as the story of what happened when the Tudors occupied the English throne is the tale of how they came to occupy that throne in the first place.

Just three years before his victory at Bosworth, the prospect of the future Henry VII one day being king of England would, to many observers, have appeared almost inconceivable. Living in Brittany, where he'd fled with his uncle from Edward IV (who viewed him as a threat to his throne), Henry appeared set for a life in exile.

Yet had these same observers examined his family's backstory, they may have chosen to reconsider Henry's prospects. Over the course of 300 years, the dynasty we now know as the Tudors had risen from near obscurity in north-west Wales to the centre of national affairs. Had these same observers also contemplated the guile, opportunism and ruthlessness with which Henry's ancestors had effected this transformation, they may not have been so surprised that he took these last few steps to power in the 1480s.

Political currents

The name "Tudor" comes from Henry VII's great-great-grandfather, a member of an influential, but relatively little-known family from Anglesey. But to truly trace the origins of the Tudors we must retreat a few generations further back still to the political currents convulsing Gwynedd, the principality of the north-west of Wales of which Anglesey was a part.

At the beginning of the 13th century, Gwynedd was very much on the fringes of western Europe, what we might call a political backwater. However, its ruler, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who controlled most of the principality by 1202, was a skilled leader who was able to extend his authority beyond the borders of his realm. So influential did Llywelyn become that, when agreeing a treaty with Philip Augustus, king of France, he could declare that he was speaking not just for himself but his Welsh contemporaries. What's more, in 1215, Llywelyn was able to incorporate formal recognition of Welsh law into Magna Carta, and claim the status of Prince of Wales.

> **The Tudors realised that it was in their interests to support Edward I's conquest of their native Wales**

Llywelyn was able to pull this off through military might and the increasing complexity of his government. Key to the latter was a new ministerial elite – and it is among this elite, in the figure of a man called Ednyfed Fychan (Ednyfed the small), that we find an ancestor of Henry VII. Ednyfed was Llywelyn's *Distain*, or steward, the most important political and judicial figure in the prince's court, a position he held from at least 1215 until his death in 1246.

Ednyfed's descendants prospered under the last native Prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (c1223–82), grandson of ab Iorweth. Unfortunately for the latter Llywelyn, Ednyfed's successors realised that their ambitions would be better served supporting Edward I of England's conquest of Wales (which led to Llywelyn's death in mid-Wales in 1282). One of Ednyfed's grandsons perished crossing from Anglesey with Edward's forces near Bangor in November of that year. The survivors, however, retained their authority in service to the English kings.

The life of one of Ednyfed's descendants, Tudur ap Goronwy ab Ednyfed, demonstrates perfectly the growing influence of English institutions on Wales in this period – and of the family's preparedness to work for whichever master served them best. Tudur (known later as Tudur Hen or, in English, Tudur the elder) served as steward to the rebel claimant to the title of Prince of Wales, Madog ap Llywelyn, in 1294. However, just two years later, he was a member of a delegation from north Wales that pledged its loyalty to Edward I. This flexibility meant that, when Tudur died in 1311, his lands in north Wales and Cardiganshire in the south-west passed to his son Goronwy ap Tudur Hen.

Like other members of this large extended family, Goronwy prospered through his consistent loyalty to Edward II, son and successor of Edward I. He was almost certainly present at the battle of Bannockburn on the English side (as they fought, unsuccessfully, against Scottish forces) in 1314. Goronwy even remained loyal to Edward II in the face of a rebellion led by the king's wife, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. Edward II lost his crown and his life, but Goronwy survived to pledge his loyalty to the ousted monarch's son, Edward III.

Goronwy's sons Hywel, who entered the church, and Tudur, who inherited his father's lands, demonstrate just how the family's loyalty to the English crown could be turned to its advantage. On 14 February 1345, the brothers were accused (almost certainly correctly) of assassinating a royal official, Henry de Shaldford, near Hywel's home in Bangor. It's possible that de Shaldford's murder was an act of revenge on one of his relatives who had allegedly betrayed a plot, led by members of Hywel and Tudur's family, to free Edward II. What is certain is that Hywel and Tudur acted with (near) impunity. The burgesses of the self-consciously English town in Wales, Caernarfon, lamented that "no Welshman dare indict them". For their part in the killing, the brothers were imprisoned only briefly.

Welsh rebellion

The ancestors of Henry VII thrived for much of the 1300s but what power-politics gave with one hand, it could take away with the other – as the family discovered at the start of the 15th century. In September 1400, juries in Ruthin and Oswestry met to determine who had supported the local esquire, Owain Glyndŵr, in his declaration that he, and not the future Henry V (son of Henry IV) was Prince of Wales.

It was entirely unsurprising that Tudur's sons Rhys, Gwylim and Maredudd ap Tudur were present at Owain's public declaration, and were forceful participants in the rebellion that followed. They were distantly related to Owain, possibly questioned Henry IV's claim to the English throne, and were prominent in their own right. The brothers had monopolised some of the key offices in Anglesey for the previous two and a half decades.

After the first flames of rebellion were extinguished, Rhys and Gwilym, along with Owain himself, were excluded from the general pardon issued to the rebels in March 1401 and their estates burned by Henry IV's forces. And so, on the evening of Good Friday that year, when the garrison of the castle of Conwy were attending mass in the town's church, Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur, with 44 others, inveigled their way into the fortress.

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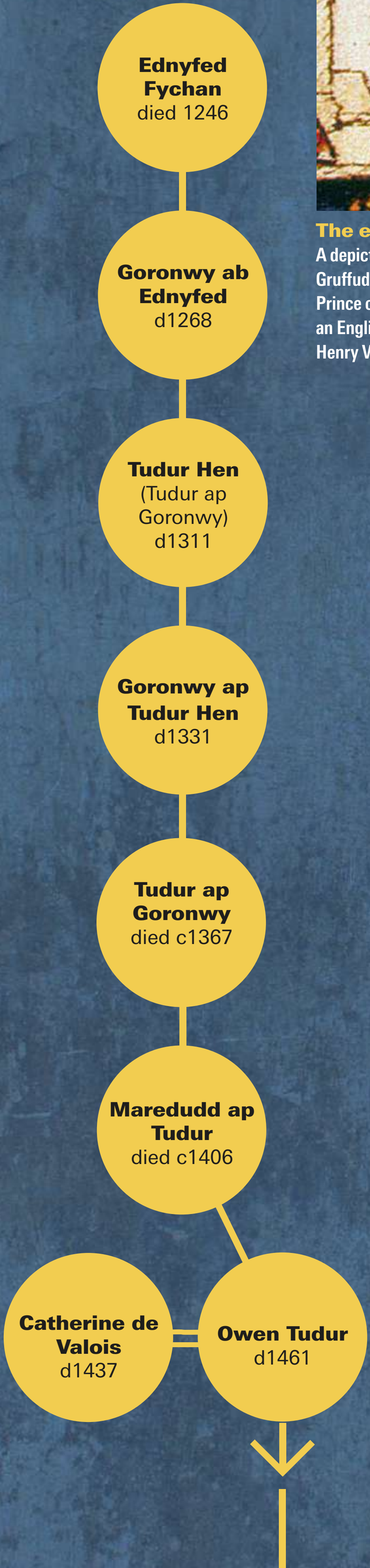
THE TUDOR LINEAGE THAT LED TO HENRY VII



Ednyfed Fychan
died 1246

Goronwy ab Ednyfed
d1268

Tudur Hen
(Tudur ap Goronwy)
d1311

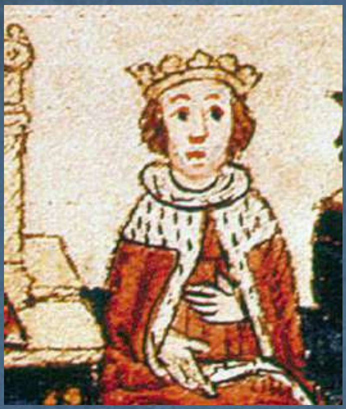
Goronwy ap Tudur Hen
d1331

Tudur ap Goronwy
died c1367

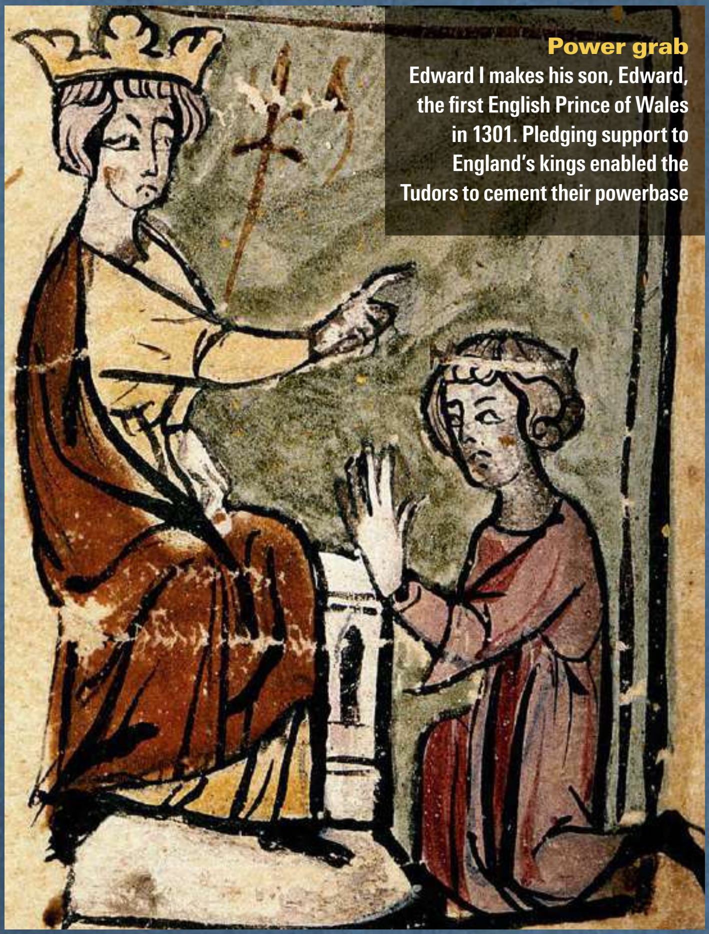
Maredudd ap Tudur
died c1406

Catherine de Valois
d1437

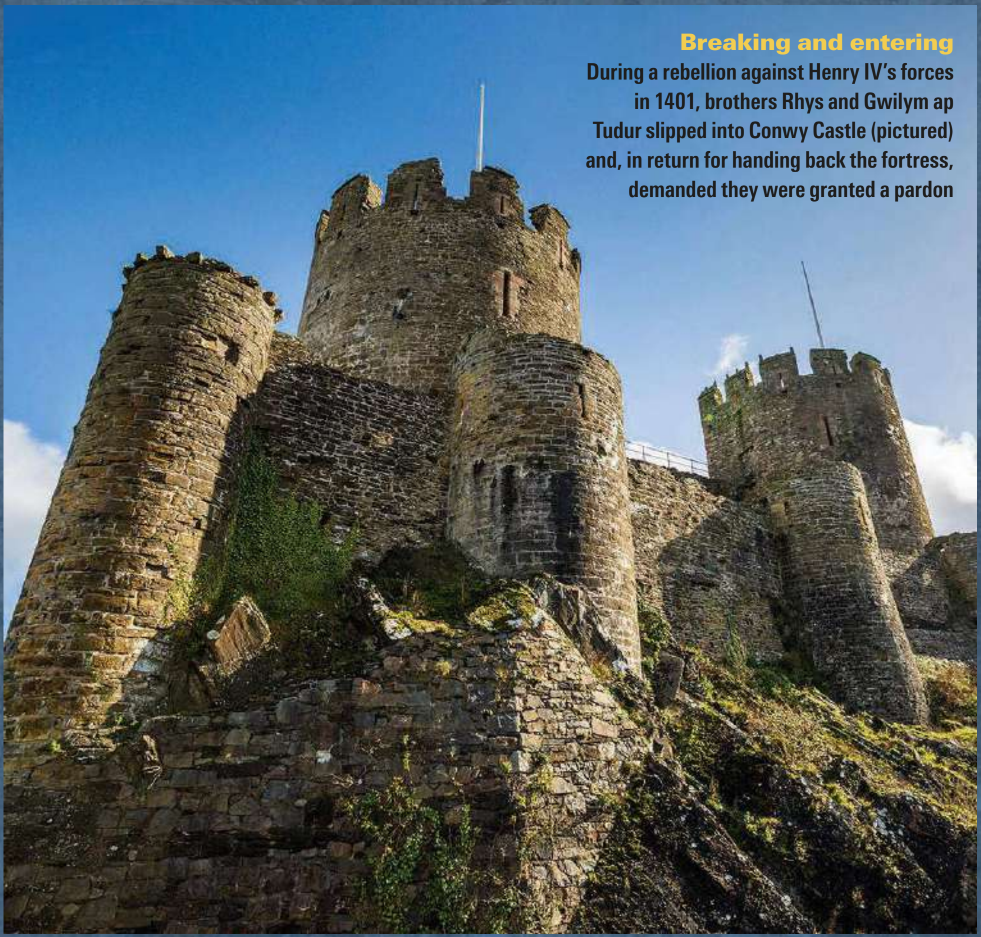
Owen Tudur
d1461



The end of the line
A depiction of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last sovereign Prince of Wales, who fell foul of an English invasion backed by Henry VII's Welsh ancestors



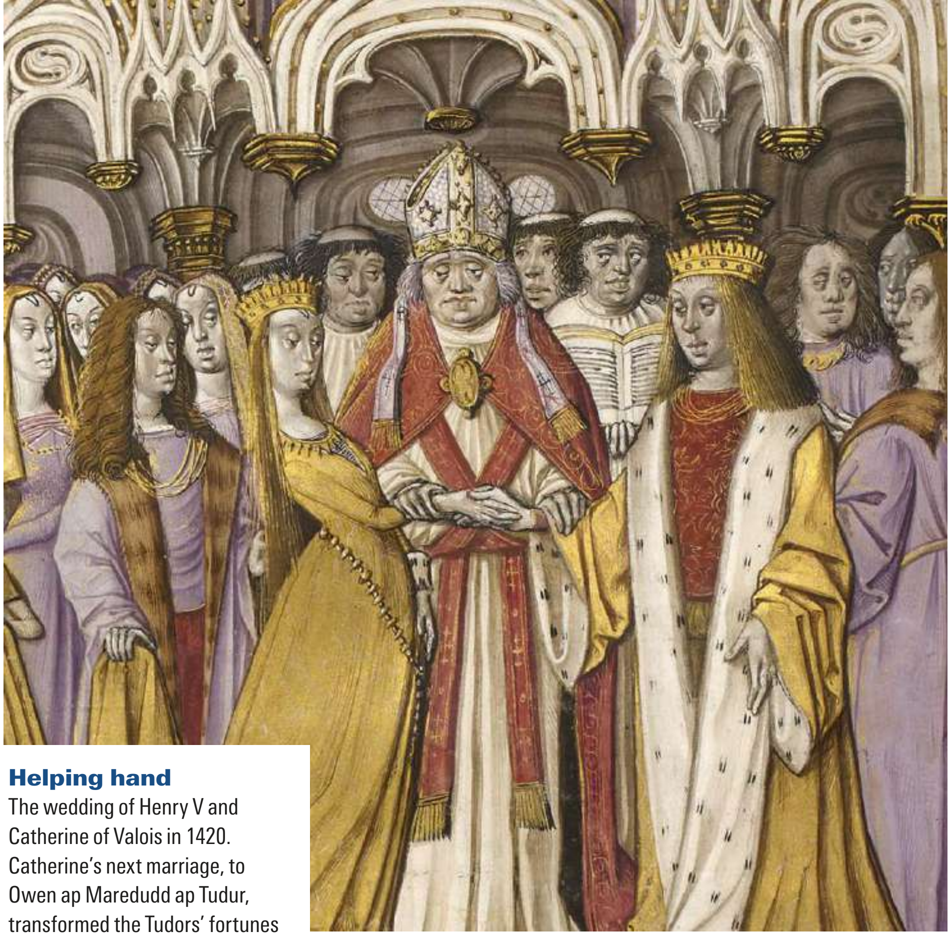
Power grab
Edward I makes his son, Edward, the first English Prince of Wales in 1301. Pledging support to England's kings enabled the Tudors to cement their powerbase



Breaking and entering
During a rebellion against Henry IV's forces in 1401, brothers Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur slipped into Conwy Castle (pictured) and, in return for handing back the fortress, demanded they were granted a pardon

Once inside, the brothers demanded a pardon as the price of returning the castle to its owners. That pardon was granted but, when it came, it was at the cost of the execution of some of the brothers' companions.

The political aims of the rebellion changed as it developed. By 1404, it attracted the support of those in England opposed to Henry IV, and also the French king, Charles VI. Glyndŵr, and by extension, the brothers, became proxies in the wars between England and France. Maredudd led the rebels of north-east Wales in 1405; Gwilym was granted a pardon in 1413; and Rhys was executed, probably at Chester, in 1411. Their lands were scattered and their social position overtaken by less committed – or more politically savvy – contemporaries, many of whom were their relatives.



Helping hand
The wedding of Henry V and Catherine of Valois in 1420. Catherine's next marriage, to Owen ap Maredudd ap Tudur, transformed the Tudors' fortunes

BRIDGEMAN

Canny marriage

The family might now have faded back into obscurity – had one of their number not secured an extraordinary marriage with a former queen of England. Owen ap Maredudd ap Tudur, son of one of the rebellious brothers, secured the hand of Catherine de Valois, daughter of King Charles VI of France, former wife of Henry V of England and mother of Henry VI. We do not know how the couple met, nor when they married, except that it must have been before the conception of their eldest son, Edmund, in 1429. The nearest to a contemporary reference comes in an elegy to Owen – written by Robin Ddu, an Anglesey poet – which noted that "he once on a holiday, clapped his ardent humble affection on the daughter of the king of the land of wine".

Owen and Catherine's marriage was problematic – parliament had passed a statute theoretically preventing Catherine from choosing her husband – but it was legitimate and so were their children. Their choice of names for their sons, Edmund (born c1430), Jasper (c1431) and Owain (1432) were self-consciously English, French and Welsh. As half-brothers of Henry VI, Edmund and Jasper enjoyed a status that was enhanced by their creation as earls of Richmond and of Pembroke in 1452.

Obscurity may have beckoned had not Owen Tudor won the hand of a former queen of England

Yet the future Henry VII's claim to the throne was not based on the Welsh or French ancestry of the three brothers Edmund, Jasper and Owain, but on another advanta-

WHEN TUDOR WAS A NAME OF SHAME

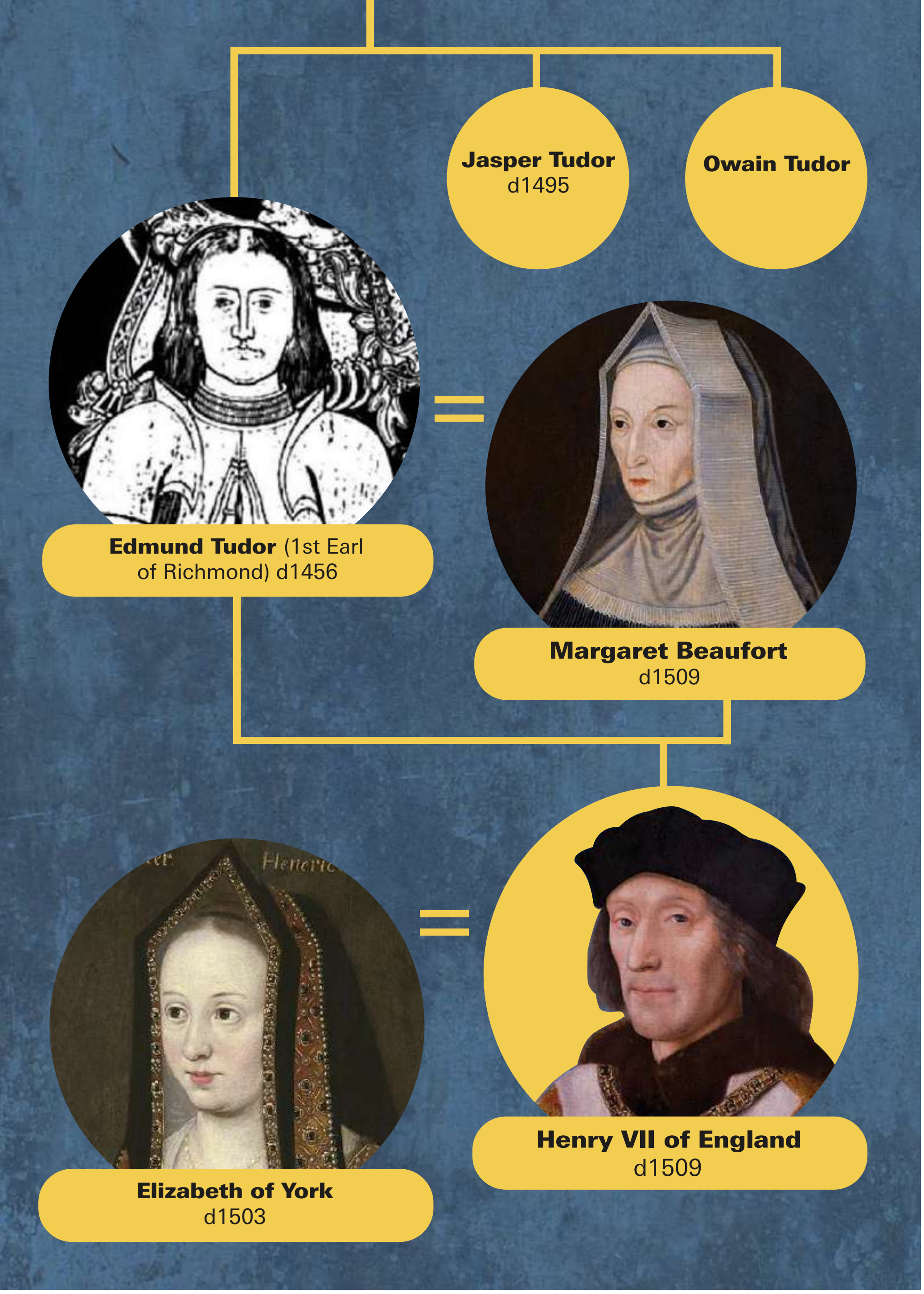
Barely anyone used the term "Tudor" until the dynasty was almost dead

Harri Fychan ap Harri Brenin ab Edmwnt ab Owain ap Maredudd ap Tudur. It's quite a mouthful, isn't it? But that's exactly how King Henry VIII could have referred to himself if he was taking into account his Welsh ancestry – and it's a name that his great-grandfather "Owen Tudor" would have recognised.

You probably won't be shocked to learn that Henry's contemporaries didn't refer to him by this 13-word moniker. You may, however, be surprised to learn that neither, for the most part, did they call him a "Tudor".

Before his victory at Bosworth, Henry VII was usually known as Henry of Richmond. When staking his claim to the throne, he downplayed the lineage of his grandfather – which is why Richard III and the pretender Perkin Warbeck did the opposite, labelling him "Harry Tydder". As kings have no need of surnames, "Tudor" would have been largely absent once he was on the throne.

So why do we use the name "Tudor" now? The Welsh celebrated Henry VII's Anglesey ancestry, but it was only late in Elizabeth I's reign that the English shared this interest. This was with an eye to the accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England. There was now an incentive to trumpet the fact that the ancestors of Henry VII – James' great-great-grandfather – helped to create a monarchy that embraced the British Isles. William Warner's *Albion's England* (1586) included a defence of the "British" ancestry of the current monarch. Samuel Daniel's *Collection of the History of England* (1626) talks of "the succession of five Sovereign Princes of the line of Tewdor". But it was David Hume's *History of England Under the House of Tudor* (1759) that cemented the name Tudor in the public consciousness – and it has well and truly stuck.



geous marriage – that of his father, Edmund, to Margaret Beaufort in 1455. Margaret was the daughter of John Beaufort (died 1444), a legitimised grandson of John of Gaunt, son of Edward III.

Henry's father, Edmund, died of plague before he was born, and so Henry began life under the protection of his uncle Jasper at Pembroke Castle. But, as Yorkist king Edward IV and his Lancastrian rival Henry VI vied for the English throne in the Wars of the Roses, the child's surroundings would soon change. Following the Yorkist victory at Towton in 1461, Edward IV acceded to the throne, and the young Henry was made the ward of the most powerful Welshman of the age. That man was William Herbert, a soldier and controller of most of the offices of the south and east of the Welsh March.

Henry was probably with Herbert at his greatest triumph – seizing the castle of Harlech for the Yorkists – in the summer of 1468. He would also have witnessed the poet Guto'r Glyn calling for Herbert to unite Wales, making Herbert "king of our nation". But Herbert's luck was about to run out. In July 1469, he was defeated by rival Yorkist forces at the battle of Edgcote (Northamptonshire) and executed.

Henry's fortunes were also buffeted by the ebbs and flows of the Wars of the Roses. In the aftermath of the brief restoration of Henry VI in 1470–71, Henry, now 13, was once again presented to the care of Jasper, his uncle. Jasper was a supporter of the Lancastrian king – and so, when the Yorkist Edward IV seized the throne once more, Jasper and his young charge were forced to flee across the Channel, where they were welcomed by Francis II, Duke of Brittany in September 1471.

Highly contested reign

It was hardly a promising position from which to launch an assault on the throne. But, one by one, over the following 14 years, the obstacles standing between Henry and power were removed. First, Edward IV died and, during the short and highly contested reign of Richard III, his young sons Edward V and Richard Duke of York disappeared into the Tower. By the time King Richard had the Duke of Buckingham executed in November 1483, exiles were beginning to coalesce around Henry and Jasper in their sanctuary in Brittany. It was there that Henry promised to marry the eldest daughter of Edward IV, Elizabeth of York, should he become king, so uniting the houses of York and Lancaster.

The Carmarthenshire poet Lewys Glyn Cothi was among those yearning for the return of Jasper, the former Earl of Pembroke, from exile – as proved by the following verse: "In what seas are thy anchors, and where art you thyself? When wilt thou, Black Bull [the black bull was Jasper's badge] come to land; how long wilt thou wait?"

Part of this poem's purpose was to solicit support for Jasper's nephew among the Welsh gentry that had maintained their contacts with the earl in exile. Many came to Henry's aid when he landed near Haverfordwest under the banner of the red dragon of his mythical ancestor Cadwaladr, on 7 August 1484. More joined him on his march north through Carmarthen and into mid-Wales.

Though Henry's army at Bosworth was far from purely Welsh, it was a Welshman called Rhys ap Thomas (or one of his men, perhaps) who, in the words of another poet, Guto'r Glyn, "killed the boar, shaved his head". The boar was Richard III, and his death made Henry the exile Henry VII, king of England.

What impact did these Welsh connections have on Henry's conduct as king? We know that in many small ways, Henry trumpeted them. He celebrated St David's Day (1 March) with the Welshmen in his court, and had his own Welsh nurse – Jane, the wife of Philip ap Hywel – take care of his younger son, Henry, in the royal nursery. It is also evident that the king's Welsh ancestry was well-known and appreciated in Wales and recorded, in Welsh, by the poets. One, Dafydd Llwyd – who Henry very likely met – was especially fulsome: "Harri was, Harri will be, Harri is, long may he live."

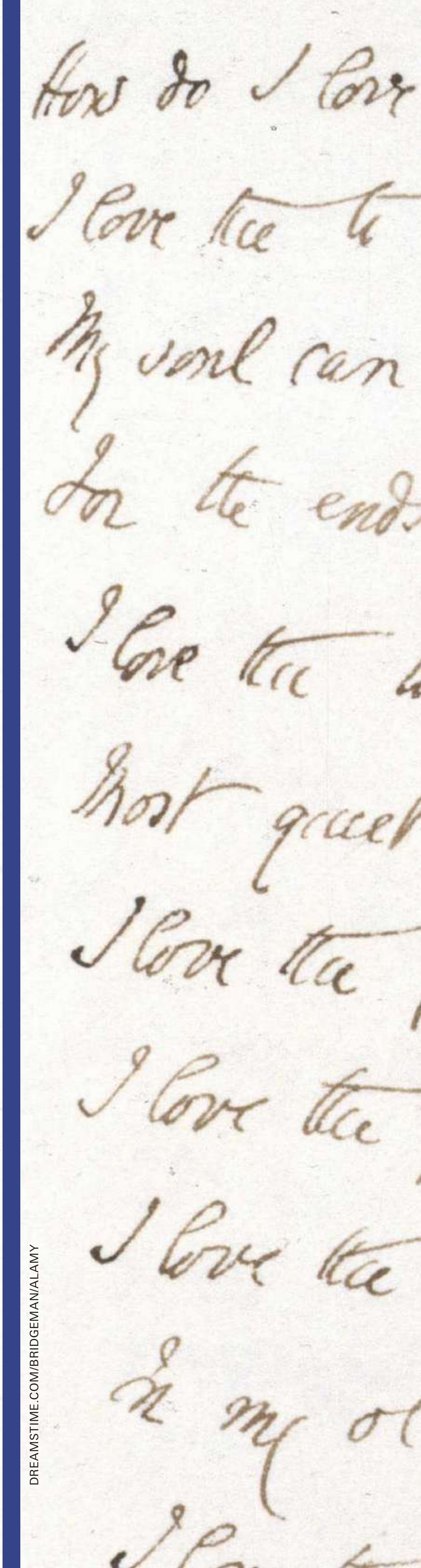
Adam Chapman is lecturer in medieval history at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

Rewriting her world

The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning has long been cast as a simpering wife whose life was dominated by men. But, writes **Fiona Sampson**, the author of a new biography of Elizabeth, she was an indomitable woman who wrote her way to fame, shucking off the expectations placed on Victorian women

Voice of the age
A 19th-century engraving of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, against a backdrop of her most-quoted poem, *How Do I Love Thee?* Her work was a standout of the Victorian era



How do I love
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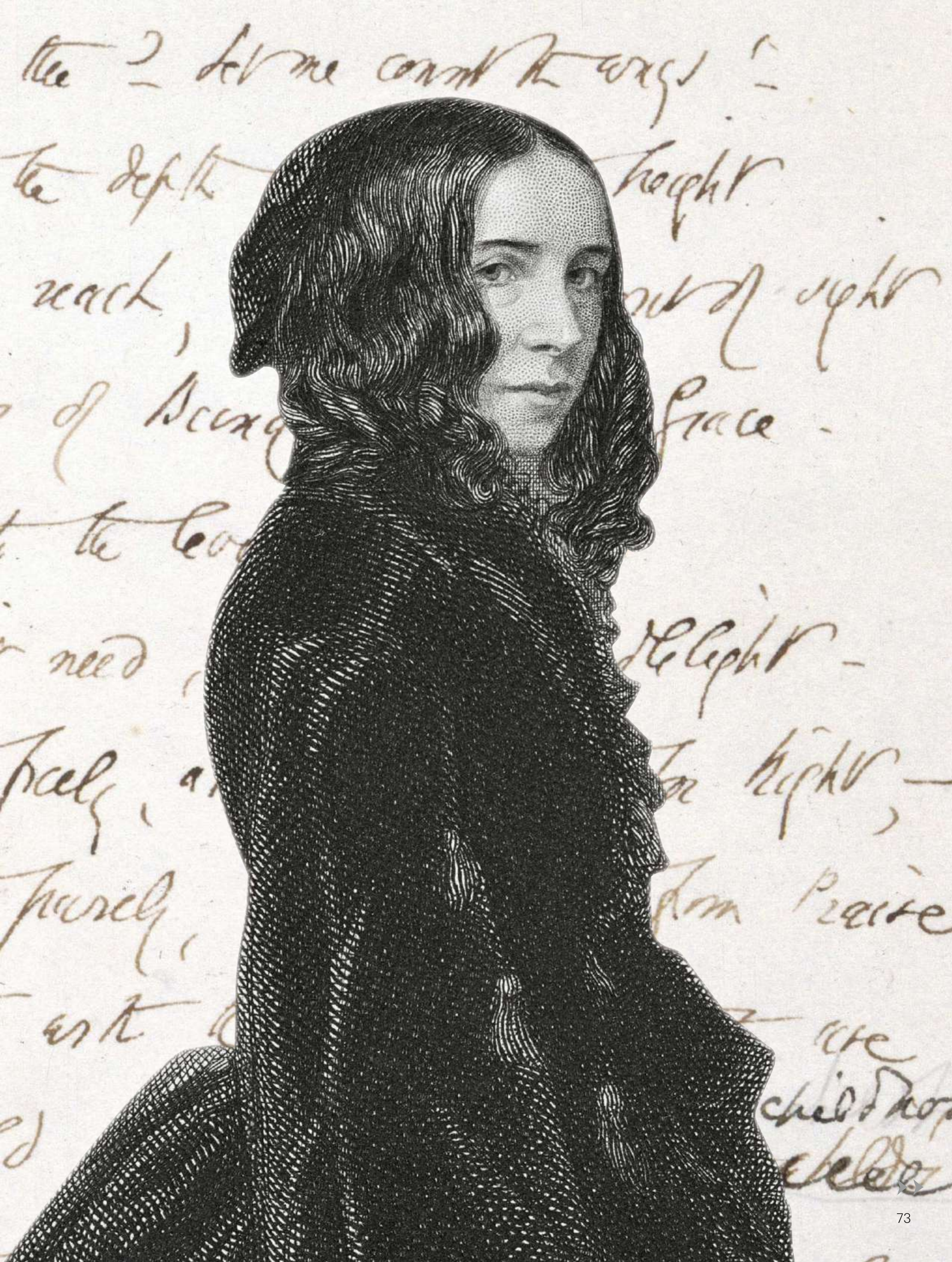
thee? Let me count the ways!
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childhood

In November 1846, the celebrated poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote home about her new life in Pisa to her old friend Julia Martin in Herefordshire:

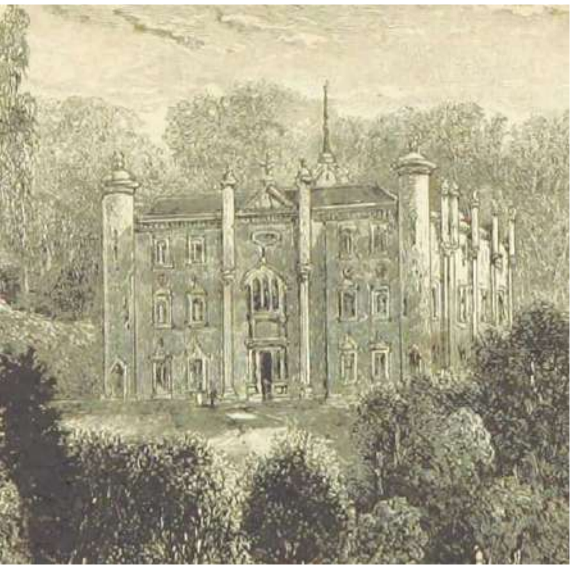
"Everyday I am out walking while the golden oranges look at me over the walls,.. & when I am tired R. & I sit down on a stone to watch the lizards… We have our dinners from the Trattoria at two o'clock, & can dine our favourite way on thrushes & Chianti with a miraculous cheapness… It is a continental fashion, which we never cease commending."

The picture this paints is charming, but it's much more than just a postcard. Elizabeth was, put simply, boasting. Every part of her new life was both hard-won and astonishing. Just three months earlier she had been to all intents and purposes a 40-year-old spinster, confined by chronic lung disease to a bedroom in Marylebone near the polluted centre of London. Now, newly married to fellow poet Robert Browning, she was living the artist's life in Pisa, having fun and growing physically stronger than she'd been for years.

This radical transformation (not technically an elopement: the Brownings had enough Victorian morality in them to get secretly married before they ran away together) is what Elizabeth Barrett Browning would eventually become most famous for. After all, it *is* a great story.

But unfortunately popular culture has allowed it to obscure her actual achievements as a prolific poet. The culprit is Rudolf Besier's play *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, which was so well-known it became a cliché. Between 1931 and 1982, it was a Broadway hit thrice over, as well as made into no less than three films and seven TV dramas. In keeping with the anti-Victorian prejudices of his own time, Besier invented a female poet simpering weakly on a couch while two powerful figures, her father and her lover, battled it out.

Broadway invented an Elizabeth stuck on a couch while her father and lover battled it out



Golden youth

A drawing of Elizabeth's childhood home, Hope End, from *The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Ten years after moving to Italy, she captured the sprawling Herefordshire estate in her 1856 epic, *Aurora Leigh*

This portrayal reflected mid-20th century scholarly thought. At the time, critics like Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling were redrawing the literary canon more narrowly than ever before to exclude most women's writing. In 1973, the works of Jane Austen, the novels of the Brontë sisters, Mary Shelley and George Eliot all failed to make it into the Oxford Anthology of English Literature.

Champion of morality

The true story is far more fascinating. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was one of the literary giants of the 19th century. In her own lifetime and during the century that followed, she was world famous as a pioneering writer who influenced many others, including Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, John Ruskin and Emily Dickinson. The author of one of the most-quoted poems of all time, *How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways*, she achieved literary celebrity at a time when most women published under male pseudonyms, or anonymously. But there was much more to her than a simple desire for fame. She was also an activist, a writer of social conscience. She advocated for Italian republicanism, fervently supported the abolition of slavery, and she believed in the equality of women and men's abilities. When she died, in Florence in 1861, her adopted homeland gave her a hero's funeral.

Which returns us to those first honeymoon months in Pisa. It was Elizabeth's poetry that brought them about. She and her husband first met on the page. When they married, Robert was his wife's junior, both in age (he was six years younger) and professional reputation, but they had been reading each other for years, partly out of writerly curiosity and partly at the behest of mutual friends. Elizabeth's 1844 *Poems* finally brought them together. When Robert read it he felt impelled to write: "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett… the fresh strange music, the affluent language, the exquisite pathos and true new brave thought… I do, as I say, love these books with all my heart---and I love you too."

The courtship that followed produced 92 meetings (before their clandestine marriage), Elizabeth's famous *Sonnets from the Portuguese* – from which *How Do I Love Thee?* comes – and another 572 letters, which became a literary cult after they were first published in 1898. But these first lines, written on 10 January 1845, could not have set the tone better. For "EBB", as she liked to sign herself, was no gifted dilettante. She had a ferocious sense of vocation and knew from childhood that she wanted to be a poet. And although this vocation was unusual for her times, it was also absolutely created by them.

Living in paradise

Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett was born on 6 March 1806 at Coxhoe Hall, County Durham: her maternal grandfather had huge industrial and mercantile interests in Newcastle upon Tyne. But she grew up on the Herefordshire country estate of Hope End, which her father bought when she was three. Long after the estate had been sold and the family had moved away, first to Sidmouth and then to London – and even 10 years after her own arrival in Italy – Elizabeth would recapture the spot in her 1856 masterpiece, *Aurora Leigh*:

"…past the lime, the lawn,
Which, after sweeping broadly round the house,
Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream
Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
Among the acacias, over which, you saw
The irregular line of elms by the deep lane
Which stopt the grounds and dammed the overflow
Of arbutus and laurel."

"Ba", as her family called her, was the first of what would eventually be 12 children, of whom 11 survived into adulthood. Such a large family was not, of course, unusual. But all her life Ba's closest friends would be her siblings: first her eldest brother, Edward, and later her sisters, Arabella and Henrietta. The family cultivated a habit of shyness; this combined with the beautiful, secluded valley of Hope End to create a closed-off, self-reliant idyll, perfect for a developing imagination. Sometime in her thirties Elizabeth captured the fierce, frank little girl she was there in a delightful, unpublished essay:

"Beth was a poet herself---& there was the reigning thought--- No woman was ever

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before such a poet as she wd. be. As Homer was among men, so wd. she be among women---she wd. be the feminine of Homer. Many persons wd. be obliged to say that she was a little taller than Homer if anything… When she was 15 she [would]… ride on a steed, along the banks of the Danube… attracting to her side many warriors… & deliver 'Greece the glorious'."

It was her Papa who named "Beth" the "Poet-Laureate of Hope-End" when she was eight, and who paid for her first publication, *The Battle of Marathon*, as a 14th birthday present. And it was from his country gentleman's library, which included works hot off the press from Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley alongside ancient Greek and Latin classics, as well as the British canon, that she got much of her education, guided at first by her mother and later by her brothers' tutors.

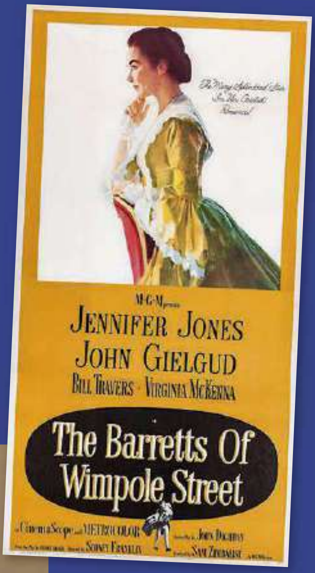
As the precociously gifted child became a teenager, she developed an obsession with translating Greek verse, the discipline that was a staple of boys' education – from which she was hugely frustrated at being excluded. She became convinced this was the perfect training for a poet and so continued to teach herself while seeking out knowledgeable correspondents: older men who responded with varying degrees of appropriateness.

Tormented by disease

But even as she pushed herself on the page, she was also pushing herself physically. Aged 15 she fell ill with a grave spasmodic illness, possibly post-viral, which saw her spend nine months confined to a spinal sling in the proto-clinical setting of the Gloucester Spa Hotel, from which she emerged scarcely able to walk. The treatments she received there were based in the old scholasticism rather than the new observational science. They included "cupping", where hot glasses were pressed to her skin to raise blisters which were believed to draw out bodily "impurities", and drinking tree bark decoctions.

Thereafter she began to suffer the repeated chest infections that, in these days before antibiotics and nebulisers, were life-threatening, and which eventually merged in what seems to have been a form of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), from which she died at 55 in 1861.

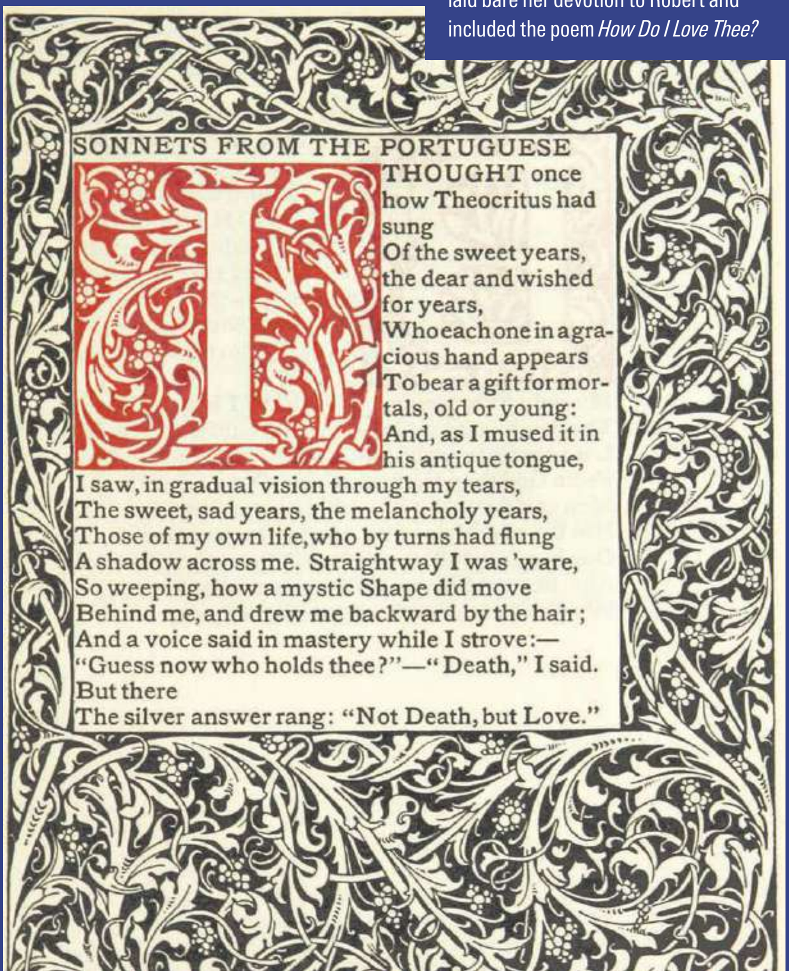
In other words, Elizabeth didn't so much daydream as *will* into being the distinguished poet we glimpse eating oranges in the Pisan sunshine. Her life was a two-fold struggle for autonomy of both mind and body. An autodidact, she built a writing life against the grain of social expectations for women. At the same time, disabled by chronic lung disease for most of her adulthood, she spent months and sometimes years at a time in bed, confined to her room, or at best stuck indoors. So used was she to acute discomfort


M-G-M presents
JENNIFER JONES
JOHN GIELGUD
BILL TRAVERS · VIRGINIA McKENNA
The Barretts Of Wimpole Street
CinemaScope and METROCOLOR
SIDNEY FRANKLIN
SAM ZIMBALIST

Delicate disposition
A 1957 poster for *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, with Jennifer Jones as Elizabeth Barrett Browning. This play characterised Elizabeth as a fragile wife

Writers' retreat
Casa Guidi, the Florentine home Elizabeth and her husband shared for 14 years. She wrote some of her most famous poetry there, including *Casa Guidi Windows*, which championed the Italian struggle for liberation from the Habsburg empire

Love at first sonnet
A page from what is thought to be an 1850 first edition of Elizabeth's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, which laid bare her devotion to Robert and included the poem *How Do I Love Thee?*



SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery while I strove:—
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But there
The silver answer rang: "Not Death, but Love."

FIONA SAMPSON

Miracle child
Elizabeth with her son, Robert (AKA Pen), in Rome, 1860. His birth was rather remarkable: her first two pregnancies ended in miscarriages, and for most of her adult life she was plagued by chronic disease

that she failed to notice her first two pregnancies until she miscarried, dismissing the first, over 24-hour labour to her sister as, "Oh, not so very violent! I have had worse pain."

When she finally gave birth to Pen (christened Robert Wiedeman) at the age of 43 it was as if, for once, her body hadn't failed her. The "beautiful and singularly intelligent little boy", according to *The Critic*, became part of her public image. In this, as in many ways, her finger was on the zeitgeist. Since the coronation in 1838, Queen Victoria had made family a high-profile British value and had already given birth to six of her own nine children.

A year later, when the Poet Laureate William Wordsworth died on 23 April 1850, Elizabeth came altogether closer to a royal connection: she was proposed as his successor. In the end the post went to Alfred Tennyson; it would take another century and a half to appoint a female laureate. But the near miss underlines how Elizabeth didn't just lock step with her era. Instead, she was one of the pioneers creating it. The Brownings trod eagerly in the Romantic poets' Italian footsteps. But – at a time when poets enjoyed rock-star celebrity, and books and magazines were mass entertainment, changing mainstream culture just as film and music do today – her own writing moved popular tastes on from Romanticism with modern, conversational language and heartfelt storytelling.

It was also newly ethical. Elizabeth differed from fellow modernisers like Tennyson, or indeed her husband Robert, in believing poetry's highest purpose is to illustrate moral and philosophical ideas, and help the reader understand them. In this, despite their different backgrounds and ages, she was recognisably contemporary with Charles Dickens, whose first novels challenging the social acceptance of poverty, including *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), were already being serialised in the 1830s. Among the great ethical statements Elizabeth became famous for were: *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), the long two-part poem which made the Italian struggle for liberation from the Hapsburg empire a reality for British readers; *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*, which appeared in the American abolitionist publication *The Liberty Bell* in 1848; and *Cry of the Children*, protesting child labour, published in the mass-circulation *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1843.

At a time when poets enjoyed rock-star celebrity, her writing reshaped popular tastes

"Blood of the slave"

This conscientious drive came partly from a religiosity typical for her century, which saw her first adopt her father's ardent non-conformism and later flirt with spiritualism. But it also had deep personal roots. Elizabeth, typical of her era in so many ways, was ahead of her time in having thought deeply about identity. She was a woman in the man's world of publishing and literary networking; she lived with the "Why?" of life-limiting disability. On top of this, she believed that she was of mixed heritage: what, internalising the prevailing racism of the era, she called in a letter to Robert "the blood of the slave".

It was a reasonable assumption. The Barretts had been Caribbean landowners for generations; Elizabeth had cousins who were of mixed heritage. As her biographer, I'd hoped to find conclusive proof that she was indeed a pioneer of black writing, a strand within the canon that is still under-acknowledged today. Such proof may still turn up, but at present the best we can say is that Elizabeth *believed* herself to be of African-Caribbean descent, and she did so in the context of "blood on her hands" guilt. For, ardently abolitionist as she would grow to be, she was descended from slavers, and the reasonableness of her assumption about her heritage comes from the normalcy of sexual exploitation as part of enslavement. Indeed this is the potent topic of her terrifying *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*.

What do you do if you inherit an overwhelming shame like this? Elizabeth Barrett Browning's solution was to turn her gifts and celebrity to good account: fighting against imperialism, slavery and the exploitation of children and women by changing public opinion. Ultimately, it's in this fiercely inventive struggle for change that she most personifies the fierce, inventive spirit of her own flawed yet fascinating era. **H**

Fiona Sampson is a prize-winning poet and writer. Her newest book, *Two-Way Mirror: The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, was published by Profile on 4 February 2021, and it will be released in the US by WW Norton in summer 2021

LISTEN Tune in to an episode of **In Our Time** that explores Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epic *Aurora Leigh*: *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0745d37*

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Ruth Goodman nominates *The History of the Countryside* as her classic book › page 85

EUROPEAN

"Italy fragmented into states ruled by competing and inter-related families, all vying for primacy"

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"We view the history of the British empire with a combination of nostalgia and selective amnesia"

Sathnam Sanghera discusses his new book, *Empireland* › page 78

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"France's wars of religion left hundreds of thousands murdered, tortured, exiled or imprisoned"

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INTERVIEW / SATHNAM SANGHERA

"It was painful to realise how my education had colonised me"

SATHNAM SANGHERA speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about his new book *Empireland*, which uncovers the pervasive and often overlooked legacy of imperialism in modern Britain

Ellie Cawthorne: Your new book explores how modern Britain is still shaped by its imperial history. Where can we still see the influence of empire today?

Sathnam Sanghera: It's absolutely everywhere. There are millions of expressions of it. You can feel it in our language – the phrase "juggernaut" comes from Sanksrit; "bungalow", "shawl" and "sandals" are all words of Indian origin; while "zombie" comes from west Africa and "toboggan" is Native American. A lot of our businesses emerged from the colonial era. Liberty of London began by selling silks and cashmere shawls from the east. The company that became Shell Oil started off importing oriental seashells. Wembley Stadium was originally known as the Empire Stadium, and the roads around it, some of which still exist, were named by arch-imperialist Rudyard Kipling. Robert Baden-Powell wanted to call the Scouts the Imperial Scouts, and the first ever book for Girl Guides was called *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire*. Then there's cricket, of course. I could go on forever.

These are all quite small examples, but of course there are much bigger things too. Britain's multiculturalism, our politics, the way we see ourselves, our psychology, our economy, the origin of lots of our wealth. My book is an attempt to measure that influence.

You argue that Britons – yourself included – aren't taught enough about this major aspect of our history. What view of empire were you given growing up?

I was never really told about it, and I don't think I'm unusual. When Tony Blair handed back Hong Kong to the Chinese, he later remarked that he hadn't known much about the history of the situation, which seems incredible. But I think that's quite typical. Even when I studied things at school which potentially had an imperial angle, we didn't explore it.

Empireland
How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain
SATHNAM SANGHERA

Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain
by Sathnam Sanghera
(Viking, 320 pages, £18.99)

We had Remembrance Day services every year, but it never occurred to anyone to tell our diverse student base that millions of brown soldiers from across the empire fought in both world wars. We studied Ireland's Great Famine, but no one thought it might be illuminating to compare it to the famines in India. I find it extraordinary that I supposedly had a very good education and yet was taught nothing about a subject that was not only one of the biggest things to ever happen to Britain, but one of the biggest things that ever happened to the world. And this is still the case – there was a survey in *The Guardian* recently which found that just 9 per cent of GCSE students at the moment are studying modules about empire.

It was painful to face up to things I hadn't been taught and to realise that in some ways my education had in fact colonised me. One of the most shocking things for me to realise was the ways in which British generalisations about Sikhs have shaped the way we view ourselves. Not that you'd be able to tell it from my physique, but Sikhs see themselves as a martial race. Yet a large part of that self-identity actually goes back to British imperialism. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the British decided that some races were loyal and some weren't. Because the Sikhs had fought with them, it was decided that we were a martial race. Imperialists even produced handbooks pointing out how we, and other chosen ethnic groups, had the perfect physiques to be fighters. We've absorbed those racist generalisations to such a degree that it's still how we see ourselves now.

How would you characterise attitudes to empire in Britain today?

A combination of nostalgia and selective amnesia. You can see the nostalgia through things like tourism companies offering "Tea & Tiffin colonial tours" of India and Africa. I think the ultimate illustration of it is the popular image of the Indian railways. You can barely put the TV on at 6pm and not see a middle-aged white presenter telling us that the railways were a great gift that the British gave the Indians. But the real story is very different. The British built those railways for their own military and commercial purposes. I actually pitched the idea of a documentary about this to a TV producer recently, but he replied that he didn't think it would work, because viewers don't want to see their prejudices challenged. And I think that's indicative of the way the British see empire. They see their history as something to be comforted by rather than something we need to face up to as a way of heading into the future.

A 2014 YouGov survey found that 59 per cent of Britons thought that the empire was "something to be proud of". For some, to be proud of British imperialism is to be patriotic, and vice versa. Any suggestion in public life that empire was not all great is seen as unpatriotic. That attitude to history isn't something you see in Germany, for example, where they can talk about the Holocaust and still be deemed patriotic. But over here, it's seen as a betrayal to dwell on any of the negativity.

At the same time, there's profound amnesia. Think of the way we talk about Winston Churchill. He's quite rightly seen as a war hero, but we forget that he was also an imperialist. And imperial troops' contribution to the world wars is forgotten to such a degree that even though plenty of Sikhs fought in the First World War, someone like Laurence Fox can go viral for complaining about the inclusion of a Sikh in the recent film *1917*.

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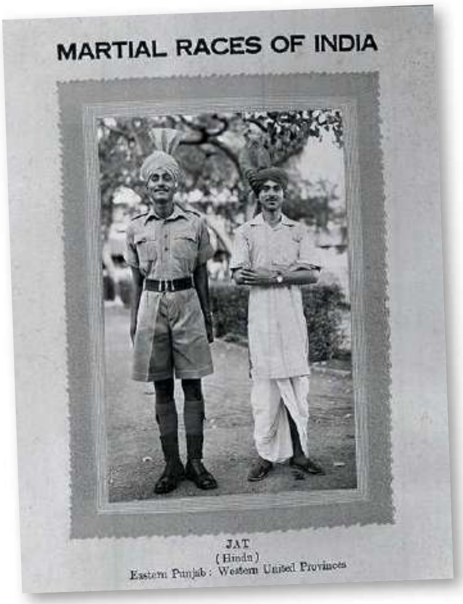
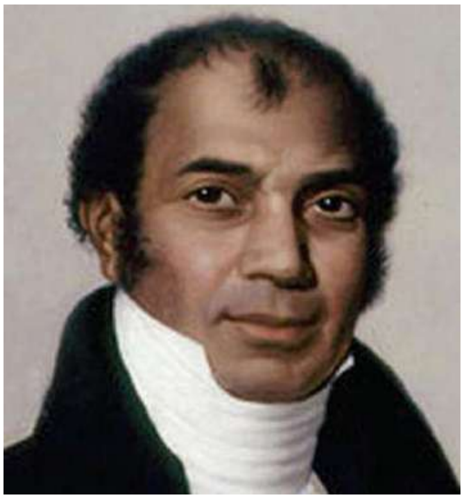
PROFILE

Sathnam Sanghera is an award-winning journalist and author who is currently a columnist and feature writer at *The Times*. His previous books are the memoir *The Boy with the Topknot* (adapted into a 2017 BBC drama) and the novel *Marriage Material*, both of which were shortlisted for the Costa Book Awards

Why do you think debates around empire have been so incendiary in recent years?
Empire encompasses a whole raft of other controversial subjects – nationalism, race, power, even misogyny. But essentially on one side you've got this idea that British empire was synonymous with nationalism and patriotism. On the other side is the idea that empire was evil. It's impossible to tally these opposing views. The way we approach empire as a balance sheet to weigh up is very problematic.

The idea that you can look at 500 years of history and come to a conclusion of whether empire was simply "good" or "bad" is historically illiterate. You can't just give the British empire a five-star rating like it's a kettle on Amazon. It's much more complicated. But very few people are saying that. Instead people tend to take extreme positions, and it's very hard to find anything resembling nuance.


MARTIAL RACES OF INDIA
JAT
(Hindu)
Eastern Punjab : Western United Provinces



ABOVE: The 19th-century Indian entrepreneur Sake Dean Mahomed, who opened Britain's first curry house
LEFT: A c1944 photograph taken to illustrate "martial races" in the Indian Army. "Racist generalisations" such as this have shaped how colonised peoples view themselves, argues Sathnam Sanghera

A common argument is that we aren't responsible for the crimes of our fathers, and so we should "let sleeping dogs lie". How would you respond to that?
We're at a point in our history where Britain is trying to work out where it is and where it wants to be. And I don't think you can work out what you want to be unless you understand your past. We're still living with so many legacies of empire, and I think our lack of understanding about their origins makes us dysfunctional as a society.

One of those legacies you discuss is Britain's attitude to race and multiculturalism. How have these been shaped by empire?
The fundamental reason we are a multicultural society today is because we had an empire. That's a very basic point, but one that I think we nonetheless struggle to comprehend as a society. The reason that I, as a person of colour, am in this country is because Britons went over to India a few centuries ago.

I'd also argue that we have a very particular brand of racism in Britain which can be best explained by the white supremacy of empire in the 19th century. The ways that imperialists of that time saw race were echoed in the specific ways that racism developed in postwar Britain. Take racial violence and the fear of racial mixing, both social and sexual, for example. Both of these were present throughout the empire in the 19th century, and strong parallels can be seen in the ways that racism was expressed in Britain in the sixties and seventies.

And then you have the colour bar. This was seen throughout the empire in the 19th century – brown people and white people did not mix socially in India or Africa. But that colour bar was also a feature of my life growing up in Wolverhampton. As late as the 1980s, there were colour bars in nightclubs, pubs and working men's clubs. And even today, in parts of my home town, there are certain bars you wouldn't go into if you're not the right colour. Finally, you've got the wild stereotypes that emerged out of the racial generalisations of the 19th century. Even now, surveys suggest that a large portion of British people believe that certain races were born to work harder than others. Those attitudes go straight back to empire.

How has empire affected ideas about immigration?
I think we're in denial about the immigrant blood in our veins in this country, and how far back it goes. There's an idea that brown and black people only came to Britain on the *Windrush* and after. But actually their presence here goes way back. Queen Elizabeth I was complaining about there being too many black people in London in Tudor times.

In the course of researching this book I discovered all these amazing characters who set up home here who I was never taught about at school. A guy called Sake Dean Mahomed, for example, who left India in the late 18th century, lived in London and opened Britain's first curry house. He became a sort of massage therapist to the king and popularised the word "shampoo". There were hundreds of lascars (Indian seamen) who stayed, servants who helped British imperialists, former slaves, actors, nurses and sportsmen.

We're also in denial about how and why people came. I grew up with the idea that ethnic minorities arrived here almost uninvited, with no link to Britain, but actually most of them *were* invited, and their imperial connections gave them citizen status. The 1948 Nationality Act made citizens of empire citizens of Britain. I don't think they're seen that way even now, which is what led to the *Windrush* scandal. The fact that British citizens could be deported encapsulates our lack of understanding about the imperial connections between our interracial communities.

The way we talk about race and immigration in this country is still really odd. Take the phrase "second-generation immigrant". What does that mean? I'm a so-called "second-generation immigrant" but I was born here, so in what way am I an "immigrant"? The fact that I am still talked about that way and continue to get messages telling me to "go back home" just shows you how in denial we are about how and why interracial communities came and resided in Britain.

Where do you see imperialism's influence on British politics?
Obviously there are events in postwar politics that played out in imperial ways – the Falklands War, Gibraltar, the handing back of Hong Kong, arguably the war in Iraq. But I think it's wider than that.

> **"The subject of empire doesn't need to be a culture war – we don't have to be at each other's throats. There is such a thing as nuance"**

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

INDIA
INDIA
INDIA
INDIA
INDIA
INDIA
'OUR' DAY
THURSDAY OCT 19th 1916

Women – including prominent suffragette Sophia Duleep Singh – collect funds for soldiers during the First World War. The imperial contribution to the world wars is significantly overlooked, says Sanghera

GETTY IMAGES

Take our politicians' obsession with being "world beating" during the coronavirus pandemic, for example – I think that goes back to an imperial psychology. Why do we get involved in so many international skirmishes when we're just a tiny country? It harks back to an era where we were massively influential in the world.

I guess my most controversial argument is that Brexit was inspired by imperial nostalgia. I'm so bored of the Brexit debate, but I don't think there's any getting over the imperial connections. In our imperial mindset you can either be the empire or you're a colony – as we see in the Brexiteer rhetoric about us being a "colony of the EU" and the obsession with "global Britain". We once ran this massive thing, and ever since we've struggled with the idea that we lost it and might have to take rules from someone else. I think that's been very psychologically difficult for Britain.

One of your chapters examines colonial looting. Do you think museums should return stolen artefacts?

In the book, I focus on looting in two particular imperial expeditions – the invasion of Tibet and the 1868 British incursion into what is now Ethiopia. Both resulted in the looting of vast quantities of items, many of which are still on display in British museums. Looting was not just permitted; collecting artefacts was very much part of the imperial agenda. The East India Company even had a museum in their offices in London in order to collect at the same time as they invaded.

There's a misconception that the controversy around stolen artefacts has just been cooked up by woke activists, but even at the time there was outrage about looting. Senior people in government complained about it, and the press were up in arms.

There's an argument that if we started giving things back, the British Museum would be empty. But that is just not going to happen. According to recent research, the British Museum only has 1 per cent of its collection on display. The rest is in storage. I think giving things back would result in incredible scholarship, and it could mend relations at a time when Britain really needs good relationships with the international community. And it's not just about material value. For a lot of nations who want their items back, it's about identity. These artefacts are emotional – bodies, religious and spiritual items, objects taken from graves.

How do you think that we *should* address our imperial history?

The first thing we need to do is abandon this balance sheet idea of history. It's corrosive. Secondly, we need to educate. There are some people who just think this topic is so poisonous that there's no hope of us ever coming to a consensus on what to teach. But I think other countries provide an example. New Zealand has recently totally revised its history curriculum and seems to be having quite a healthy debate about its past. President Macron is getting French museums to repatriate certain items. And Germany provides a great example of how to confront difficult history – police trainees are made to study Nazi history, for example. Germany has a very proactive relationship with the past, and I think there's inspiration to be found in what they do.

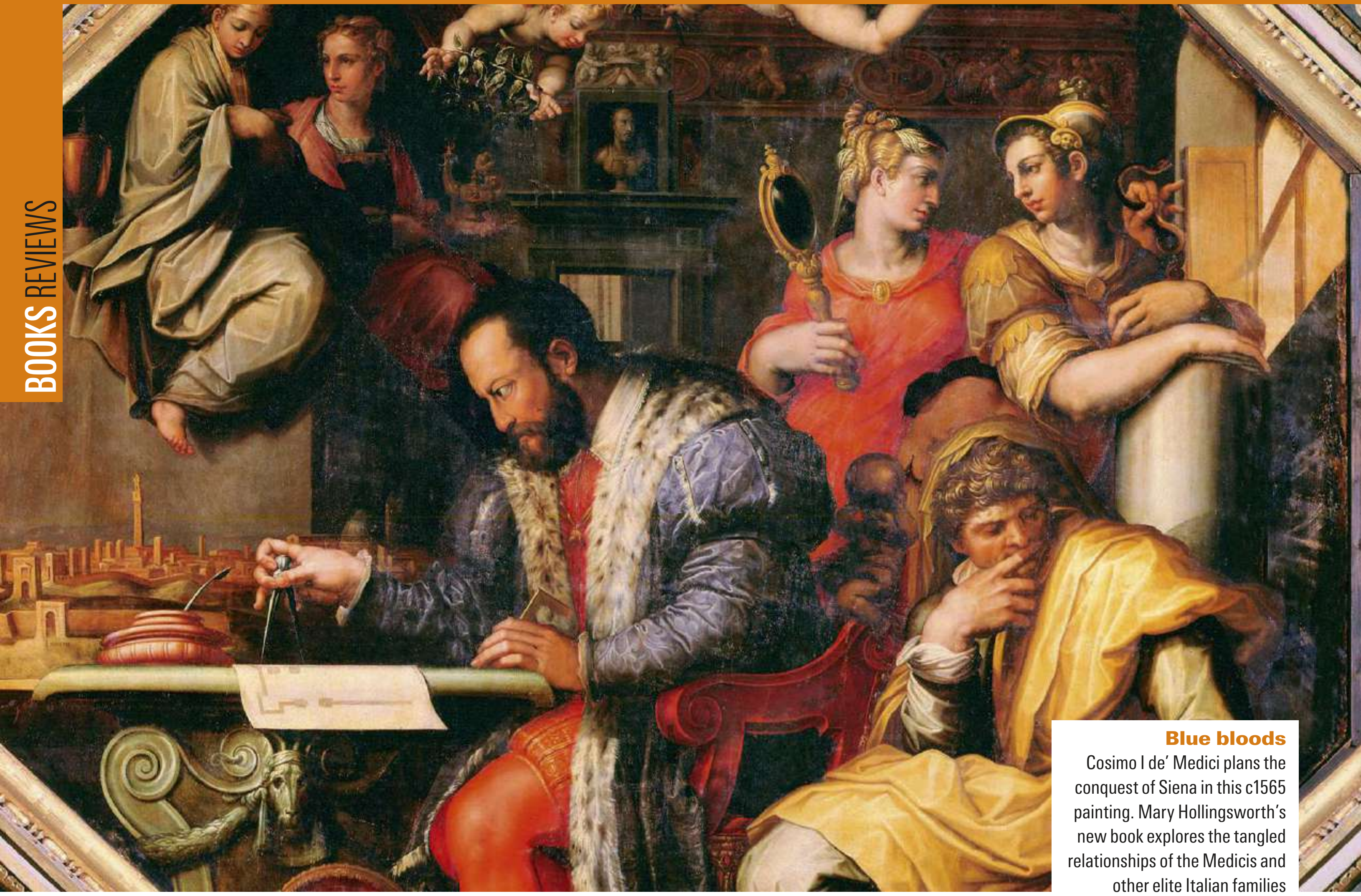
If you could convey one thing to your readers about empire, what would it be?

I hope that people read this book and realise that the subject of empire doesn't need to be a culture war – we don't have to be at each other's throats. There is such a thing as nuance, and history is argument, you don't always have to win. I would hate for anyone to read my book and agree with every single thing I've said. Equally, it'd be weird if anyone disagreed with every single thing in it. Both left and right can learn things from people they disagree with, and the discussion around empire doesn't need to be the poisonous thing it is at the moment.

At the moment the focus of debate is on statues. The conversations sparked by statues being pulled down have been amazing, but they're still only statues. I don't know about you, but I don't generally notice them all that much. There are much more profound legacies of empire, like our language, our psychology, our racism. Those are much bigger conversations that I don't think we've even begun to have yet. H

MORE FROM US

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Sathnam Sanghera on our podcast soon at **historyextra.com/podcast**

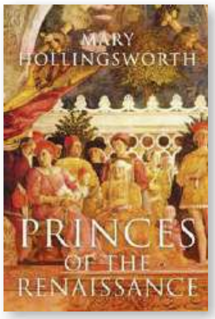


Blue bloods
Cosimo I de' Medici plans the conquest of Siena in this c1565 painting. Mary Hollingsworth's new book explores the tangled relationships of the Medicis and other elite Italian families

EUROPE

Family drama

JOANNE PAUL recommends a richly illustrated deep dive into the complex relationships of Renaissance Italy's leading families, from charismatic dukes to evil uncles



Princes of the Renaissance
by Mary Hollingsworth
Apollo, 512 pages, £35

On 12 August 1529 the Holy Roman Emperor (as well as Archduke of Austria, King of Spain and Lord of the Netherlands) Charles V, placed his booted feet on Italian soil for the first time in his almost 30 years. He had inherited the Kingdoms of Naples, Sicily and Sardinia as part of the Crown of Aragon at the tender age of 15, though it took him almost as many years to visit the Italian peninsula. His inheritance meant he could lay claim to the legendary *corona del ferro* – the Iron Crown – traditionally used in the coronations of kings of Italy. Over the centuries, however, Italy had fragmented into smaller independent city states, most of which were ruled by competing and inter-related families, simultaneously vying for primacy within Italy and independence from foreign forces, including Charles V and his imperial ambitions.

Theirs is the story detailed in *Princes of the Renaissance*, the latest book by author and historian Mary Hollingsworth. Like the historical figures Hollingsworth details, the topic is ambitious, requiring the mastery of some 200 years of history, a dozen cities across Italy, and countless charismatic dukes, princes, popes, princesses and regents. From Alfonso of Aragon and his conquest of Naples in the mid-15th century, through the Borgia and Medici ascendency, to the rivalry between France and the Holy Roman Empire for cultural and continental supremacy in the 16th century, *Princes of the Renaissance* seeks to balance stories of politics, power and patronage alongside family drama and rivalry.

Like any Renaissance work of art, this book is full of treasures to be uncovered.

AKG-IMAGES

Among some of the most glorious are the hundred or so images dotted throughout the book, of building facades, gardens, statues, frescos, paintings and portraits – evidence of the princely patronage and artistic flair inspired by the central figures of the book. In among all the dramatic naturalism of the portraits and paintings, one of the most human images is from the fresco at Villa Barbaro, where the artist, Paolo Veronese, has included an image of the Venetian patron's young daughter, peeking through a fake door, with an expression of both mischief and coyness. It is a lovely reminder, through all the tales of murderous uncles, cousins and siblings, that familial love and the innocence of children endure.

Each chapter also offers a glimpse into a tantalising tale of intrigue and drama, punctuated by the scenes and settings offered in the accompanying images. In contrast, perhaps, to the Venetian daughter, one of the most shocking stories is of Ludovico Sforza (aka Ludovico il Moro), the quintessential evil uncle, who strained every sinew to wrench power from his young nephew Gian Galeazzo Sforza and the boy's mother, executing his late brother's loyal right-hand man, confining his sister-in-law and forbidding her to see her fatherless son. When his nephew was of age, he reportedly stood over and laughed at the youth's attempts to consummate his new marriage, before the young man died in mysterious circumstances. At the same time, the book reminds us, Ludovico was also an important patron of Leonardo da Vinci and commissioned *The Last Supper*; his mistress was the subject of da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine*.

To return to our analogy of a work of Renaissance art, this book, too, at times might seem overwhelming and require some guidance to fully appreciate. Fortunately, there is a healthy-sized appendix of family trees, tables and maps. (I wouldn't, therefore, recommend buying this as an e-book: the ability to flip from chapter to appendix is indispensable.) A guiding hand is necessary while traversing so much time and space, and through the muddle of family connections, rivalries, relationships and networks.

Readers may seek a sense of narrative, and the book is divided between a focus on the art of politics and the art of the Renaissance. Its most compelling moments are where it brings these together, for instance in Alfonso of Aragon's *ora del libro* – when he would set aside an hour each day, even while in camp with his army, to listen to his humanists (and one might wish today's "rulers" would do the same).

There are perhaps two ideal ways to read this book. The first is to really take one's time, using the family trees of the appendix to make sense of the names, relationships and larger histories that dot each of the chapters. The casual reader may get lost; though what a place to get lost, wandering among the "sons of Niccolò" (the adulterous and fertile Niccolò III of Ferrara, but one can be forgiven for thinking of these princes as rhetorical sons of the Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli).

The second way is chapter by chapter – delving into each moment, immersing oneself in the time, place, family and characters of each chapter.

> **"There are lovely reminders, through all the tales of murderous uncles, cousins and siblings, that familial love endures"**

One could imagine – with a smile – stepping upon Italian soil (like our Charles V) with this book in hand. Perhaps in Florence reading about the Medici, gazing upon the famous Duomo and enriching the experience by reading Hollingsworth's account of the murder of "golden boy" Giuliano de' Medici that took place there in 1478. Or following more directly in Charles V's footsteps, in Bologna, reading about his reception by Italian princes two years after his troops sacked Rome in 1527. This, of course, ended the English king Henry VIII's hopes for an annulment of his marriage, due to the kinship between Catherine of Aragon and Charles V.

As this example demonstrates, it does add something to the history to understand these complex familial relationships. For instance, the real joy of history exists in the realisation that Clement VII, the pope who placed the Iron Crown on Charles V's head in 1530, was born Giulio de' Medici: the son of the murdered Giuliano de' Medici.

Princes of the Renaissance offers a chance to visit a glittering, at times rather gory, world that is different and yet dreamily familiar to our own.

Joanne Paul is senior lecturer in early modern history at the University of Sussex, specialising in Renaissance Europe

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Cathy Newman on history's greatest duos

"When I embarked on my book *It Takes Two,* I didn't want to write just about cloying romantic couples. Obviously great love stories are part of it, but it's much more about the nature of partnership and collaboration, and what it is about the nature of a relationship between two people that can lead to something special, whether it's business duos, sibling relationships or creative partnerships."

Padraic X Scanlan on slavery's ongoing links to the British empire

"I think there's a national myth that, although Britain may have once been a slave trader, in the 19th century it turned against slavery and went from an empire devoted to slavery, to an empire devoted to freedom. But this is just not true. One of the core arguments of my book, *Slave Empire*, is that the institutions of British imperial power, especially in the Atlantic world, were built on slavery and those foundations survived slavery's abolition."

Carolyne Larrington on badly behaved Norse Gods

"Stories about the gods behaving in dubious ways weren't supposed to be moral examples. Rather, the gods behave badly simply because they can. They're gods! These myths were meant to demonstrate how separate the gods were, and how different rules applied to them. If you were a human you certainly wouldn't be able to get away with lying, cheating or seducing other people's wives."

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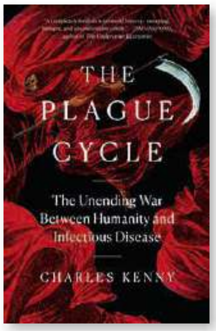
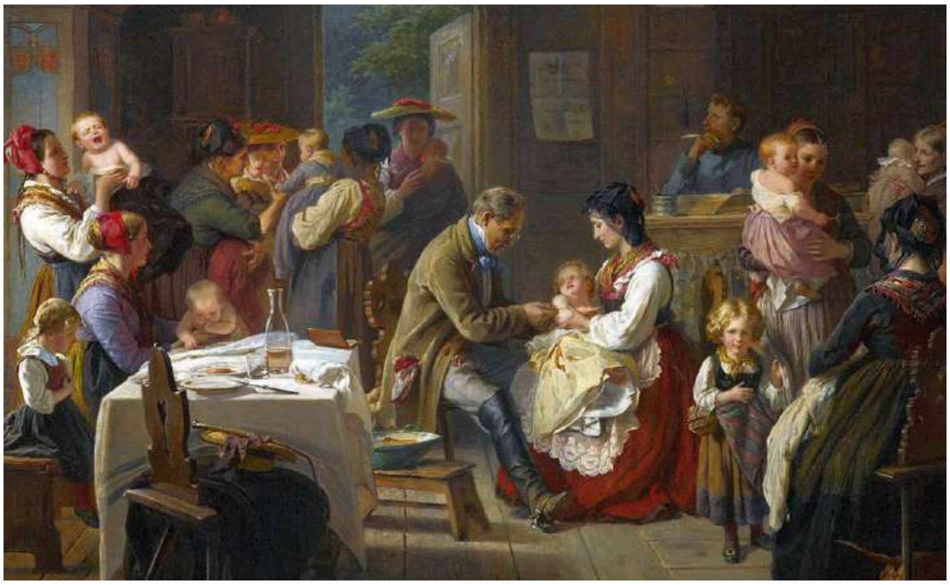
MEDICINE

Blighted by disease

JOHN MANTON enjoys a unique and timely look at the history of epidemics and our handling of them, which shines a light on the political economy of disease control



The Plague Cycle: The Unending War Between Humanity and Infectious Disease
by Charles Kenny
Scribner, 320 pages, £20



Sharp scratch A doctor vaccinates a baby against smallpox, 1868. Charles Kenny's latest book considers humanity's efforts around the globe to survive epidemics, from established medicine to non-scientific contributions

BRIDGEMAN

In the wake of the SARS and MERS outbreaks earlier this century, as well as the dangers of new strains of influenza, the Ebola epidemic, and popular concerns with threats to the viability of antibiotics, there was already a strong audience for popular medical history. Unsurprisingly, that has grown hugely in the past year. The exposure of grievous inequality by the Covid-19 pandemic, and forced trade-offs between a wide range of social factors, brings the political economy of disease control into focus as never before. Charles Kenny's book, in the planning since 2015, gains resonance from being able to reckon with the significance and potential aftermaths of the current crisis. It discusses the coronavirus pandemic throughout.

Despite its subtitle, this book does not present the story of human infection as an unending war. Kenny opens his account of humans' experience of infectious disease with a gloss on Thomas Malthus's 1798 treatise on political economy, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. In Kenny's opinion, a political economy based on Malthus's pessimistic equation between agricultural production, urbanisation, starvation and illness became obsolete shortly after its publication. Technical improvements both in medicine and social organisation during the 19th century made European and North American urban flourishing possible, but it also gave rise to the wave of imperialism at the root of many of today's health inequalities and developmental puzzles.

Through the first chapters, Kenny, formerly a development economist with the World Bank, provides an accessible account of the history of human accommodations to the infectious toll of sedentary agriculture and the growth of trade, drawing on anthropology and economic history. He looks at military campaigns such as Napoleon's invasion of Russia, and the emergence of quarantine in early modern Europe. In the middle portion of the book, he turns his gaze to the 19th-century development of international agreement on health regulation, which happened alongside technical developments in diagnosis and treatment. As he approaches the present day in the last chapters, he pivots to the evidence provided by evaluative social sciences such as health economics, and away from the work of historians of medicine concerned with disease control in the 20th century.

> **"The book's major strength is in its explicit linking of the history of medical progress to the lessons of international development"**

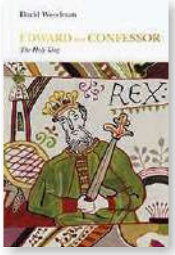
Kenny's book provides very readable, appealing and sometimes grotesque accounts of some of the more spectacular epidemics and infectious threats through our history. The author is also keen to recognise non-western and non-biomedical contributions to effective control of disease, for instance in his account of smallpox variolation in China and India and its translation into vaccination technologies.

Readers will need to consult other recent histories of infectious disease and global health for a cultural history of epidemics and pandemics, a discussion of the role of climate and environmental pressures on the course of human health and disease, or an account of ground-level infection and disease control. The major strength and unique contribution of this book, however, is in Kenny's explicit linking of a history of medical progress and resulting vulnerabilities and inequalities, to the lessons and demands of international development, at a time when finding solutions to our infectious problems could not be more urgent. **H**

John Manton is a historian of health planning and disease control at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

MEDIEVAL

Journey to power



Edward the Confessor: The Sainted King
by David Woodman
Allen Lane, 160 pages, £14.99

Edward the Confessor is best known as the king whose death in 1066 precipitated the Norman conquest, but his life wasn't much more peaceful than the crisis that followed his death.

As a child, Edward witnessed his father's kingdom conquered by a Viking army, and he was forced to flee into exile in Normandy. His mother, Emma, married the son of the Danish conqueror who had been her husband's enemy, while Edward was left to languish in exile for 25 years.

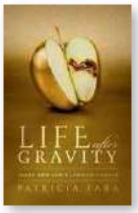
When Edward finally managed to return to England and became king, his long absence hampered him as he tried to establish his power. He struggled to deal with those who had risen to prominence during his exile, especially the mighty family of Earl Godwine, and he was weakened by his lack of an heir. In 1066 his reign ended as his father's had done, with England conquered again – this time by Emma's Norman relatives. Edward was transformed into a saint mostly because post-Conquest kings found it useful to promote him as one, to bolster their claims of continuity with England's Anglo-Saxon past.

David Woodman's *Edward the Confessor: The Sainted King* is the latest addition to the Penguin Monarchs series, an attractive set of pocket-sized royal biographies. The short format requires a concise, swift-moving narrative, and Woodman provides a very readable introduction to the tangled politics of 11th-century England. His style is lucid and precise as he traces Edward's long journey from exiled prince to patron saint of the English royal family. As Woodman concludes by saying, it is impossible to get a real picture of Edward's character from the medieval sources. But if the central figure in the story remains an enigma, the political maelstrom that surrounded Edward throughout his life makes for a fascinating tale in its own right.

Eleanor Parker, lecturer in medieval English literature at Brasenose College, Oxford

SCIENCE

Behind the legend



Life After Gravity: Isaac Newton's London Career
by Patricia Fara
OUP, 304 pages, £25

During the first wave of Covid-19, Isaac Newton briefly trended on social media. "When Newton stayed at home to avoid the 1665 plague, he discovered the laws of gravity, optics, and he invented calculus," read one version of the meme. Its message – What will *you* achieve during lockdown? – was only slightly diminished by the fact that Newton's vaunted *annus mirabilis* is largely a myth.

In her 2002 book *Newton: The Making of Genius*, Patricia Fara showed how the myth of Newton as an ascetic intellectual, a scientific saint who thought little of food or sleep, was constructed by a group of admirers. In *Life After Gravity*, we re-encounter them as friends and colleagues of the mature Newton: a cosmopolitan gentleman and wealthy administrator. Fara is a Cambridge academic, but the university city, home to a younger Newton, barely features. Instead we are thrown into London life at the turn of the 18th century.

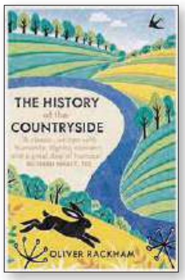
The book is neatly structured around a Hogarth painting replete with Newtonian symbolism. This is not the squalid London of *Gin Lane* but the burgeoning imperial hub of Handel and Walpole. The painting depicts a theatrical performance in the richly decorated drawing room of John Conduitt, Newton's quasi-son-in-law and his successor as master of the Royal Mint. A bust of the great man looks down on an audience of princes and aristocrats. Fara reveals how the supposedly reclusive mathematical philosopher was plugged into high society; he was a wealthy investor in the ill-fated South Sea Company and, through his presidency of the Royal Society, supported the growing slave trade.

Science is always part of society, as Fara entertainingly shows. She assembles an array of sources to show how the cold questions of physics Newton was considering as he corrected the second edition of the *Principia* were woven into the theology and politics of Hanoverian England.

Seb Falk, author of *The Light Ages: A Medieval Journey of Discovery* (Allen Lane, 2020)

THE CLASSIC BOOK

Ruth Goodman on a revelatory read on Britain's countryside



The History of the Countryside
by Oliver Rackham
(first published 1986)

Everyone should read this book, even if they are not particularly interested in history or indeed the countryside. This is one of those eye opening, revelatory books that overturns myths and centuries of received literary wisdom. It was, and still is, a passionate call to look afresh at the world around you and question everything that you thought you knew.

I read it when it first came out in 1986. I was in my early twenties then, and entranced by the detective work and the interplay between the real physical world and the written word. It has radically altered my relationship with the natural world and gave me the opportunity to begin to understand and investigate the great outdoors in a wholly different way.

Rackham pulls together archaeology, biology, geography, photographs, maps and written documents to create a comprehensive challenge to the dogmas and assertions that then dominated many influential people's attitudes to the British countryside.

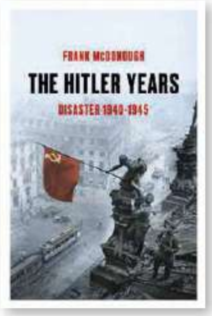
If anyone ever asks you why they should bother with history or why it's relevant today, then point them to this. In investigating and re-evaluating the past in this way, Oliver Rackham was a powerful voice pushing the government and its agencies, as well as the conservation trusts and many private landowners, towards more informed land management, better ecological practices and more sustainable production. His work has changed both minds and policies. It continues to do so. Oh, and it's a fascinating read.

Ruth Goodman is a public historian, author and broadcaster

SECOND WORLD WAR

Bringer of death

NIGEL JONES applauds a new book that deftly positions Hitler as the chief architect of the Second World War – and ultimately the agent of his own downfall



The Hitler Years: Disaster 1940–1945
by Frank McDonough
Head of Zeus,
656 pages, £35

The decisive role of the individual in making history is an unfashionable concept for many modern historians, but Professor Frank McDonough is not among them. For, as he argues in this second volume of his vast history of the rise and fall of the Third Reich, had Hitler never lived, the Second World War would not have happened, and the shape of today's world would look very different.

It was Hitler's powerfully amoral will, mesmerising charisma, and above all his insanely obsessive mania to eliminate the Jews, vanquish Bolshevism, and win Germany *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east that made him ruler of much of Europe, but eventually destroyed him and his evil regime and left the continent in ruins.

The book opens with the führer master of all he surveyed. Having destroyed Poland and divvied the conquered country up with his partner in crime, Stalin, the dictator occupied western Europe in a short Blitzkrieg campaign, leaving Britain alone in defying him. It was then, writes McDonough, that his racist ideology led him to make the fatal error that would undo him.

Instead of invading and completely crushing the island, he launched his surprise attack on his Soviet ally with inadequate resources, drawing Germany into an unwinnable struggle that would sap and finally break his formidable military might. McDonough repeatedly reminds us that it was the Soviets that "won" the war – albeit at the price of around 26–27 million lives. Compared to that blood sacrifice, the losses of the western allies were negligible.

Hitler's own allies also hastened his doom. Japan drew the US into the war, making its final outcome inevitable, while he was continually distracted by having to rescue his Fascist friend Mussolini from defeat in the Balkans, north Africa and finally Italy itself. Given the odds against *Endsieg* – or "ultimate victory" – it is astonishing that Germany held out for as long as it did. A major reason for that being, as McDonough also emphasises, that Hitler enjoyed the support of most Germans until the bitter end. McDonough states that, according to Gestapo files, those who resisted Nazism were a tiny minority of 1 per cent.

Foremost among the many crimes committed by this man and the regime he created, of course, was the Holocaust: the deliberate attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe. McDonough pulls no punches in attributing guilt for this unprecedented atrocity beyond solely Hitler himself. He initiated the crime, but it needed the help of the SS, SD, Gestapo, the Wehrmacht, and behind them the overt or tacit support of millions of ordinary Germans to accomplish it. It is the destruction wreaked by this one man's demonic drive that most appals: lives lost and ruined, cities razed, nations ravaged, all for nothing.

> **" It is the destruction wreaked by this one man's demonic drive that most appals: lives lost and ruined, cities razed, nations ravaged "**

Considering the enormous canvas that McDonough covers in this exemplary book, there is little left out. His narrative includes economics, battle statistics, anecdotes and authorial opinions without ever losing its pace or coherence. Fact-paced, lucidly and clearly written in a style appealing to fellow academics, students and general readers alike, it makes for grim but necessary reading. His publishers have done their author proud: copiously illustrated and beautifully designed, the book presents an awful subject in an uncommonly attractive package. **H**

Nigel Jones' books include *Countdown to Valkyrie: The July Plot to Assassinate Hitler* (Frontline, 2009)

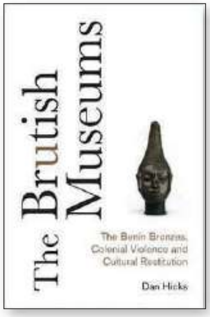
GETTY IMAGES

Hypnotic leader Hitler visits Wehrmacht soldiers in 1941. The second instalment of Frank McDonough's history of the Third Reich lasers in on Hitler, who commanded the support of the majority of Germans until the end

EMPIRE

Troubled legacy

SUBHADRA DAS praises a bold title that investigates the violence surrounding colonial loot stashed in British museums


The Brutish Museums
The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution
Dan Hicks

The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution
by Dan Hicks
Pluto, 336 pages, £20

As part of its campaigns in 2015, the activist collective Rhodes Must Fall Oxford, which works to address the legacies of colonialism at the University of Oxford, called the Pitt Rivers Museum "one of the most violent spaces in Oxford". *The Brutish Museums* forms part of Dan Hicks' response to that statement. Hicks is professor of contemporary archaeology at Oxford's School of Archaeology and also a curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and he applies both his skills as an archaeologist and a museum curator in the writing of this book. The result is an unprecedentedly detailed – and horrifying – account of the 1897 British Punitive Expedition to Benin City (now the capital of Edo State in modern Nigeria) that frames museums as storehouses of the spoils of war.

Hicks makes the case that the violence was twofold. During the raid, Benin City was machine-gunned and burned to the ground, with no attempt to account for just how many people were killed, excepting the eight members of the expedition itself. In its aftermath, the loot – about 10,000 objects, nowadays widely called the Benin Bronzes – were brought to Britain and sold or donated to museums, whose curators displayed them as "primitive art", devoid of context and dehumanising their creators and owners.

For Hicks, the ways in which the story of the expedition have previously been told – or more precisely not told – in and beyond museums, were themselves an act of violence. His approach to the history of the Benin Bronzes is forensic in both senses of the word. It is a detailed account, based on archival research, of the calculation behind, and violence of, the expedition. At the same time, the book reads like a public lecture in museum studies, with a lot of theory alongside the history. Hicks describes "necrography", the "writing of loss" achieved by mapping where the objects from Benin City ended up, and "chronopolitics", the political processes whereby museum labels freeze a particular culture in the past, thereby silencing its people in the present.

The Pitt-Rivers is not alone in starting to come to a reckoning with its colonial past – similar research and redisplays are happening in museums in the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria. In France, the 2018 Savoy-Sarr Report has revealed how the overwhelming majority of art objects from African countries are currently stored in European museums. *The Brutish Museums*, though, marks a landmark cultural moment, as it is the first time a curator in a UK museum has made the case for restitution based on archival research.

Some of Hicks' critics may argue that he – a white, male, Oxford professor – is part of the problem, and it is clear that his public platform to write and publish this book is considerably higher than those of people outside the museum and heritage sector who have been calling for restitution for decades. Nevertheless, in writing this book and taking this position, he may also be part of the solution. If the arguments of the descendants of those who massacred in the 1897 expedition haven't been enough to convince us, perhaps the evidence from our own museum archives might. **H**

> **"Museum labels can freeze a particular culture in the past, thereby silencing its people in the present"**

Subhadra Das is a curator and researcher at University College London

RUTH CRAFER

FROM FACT TO FICTION

Crying for change

Kate Mosse on the latest novel in her Burning Chambers series, *The City of Tears*

Where does this new instalment of your series take the story?
The story starts in Languedoc in 1572, with the Joubert family discussing whether or not they should attend the royal wedding between the Huguenot Henry of Navarre and the Catholic Marguerite de Valois – intended to bring peace to France after 10 years of religious war. From Paris, the action moves to the "city of tears" itself, Amsterdam, and finally to Chartres.

What fascinated you about France's wars of religion?
The sequence of wars in the late 16th century was a turning point in French history and left hundreds of thousands murdered, tortured, exiled and imprisoned. Every corner of the land was decimated. Perhaps the most notorious and treacherous engagement was the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, when the Huguenot leadership was all but wiped out in a matter of hours. Some 3,000 people were slaughtered in Paris and perhaps as many as 70,000 more killed in copycat massacres in the following days across the length and breadth of the country. It's a tragedy that lies at the heart of the book and is a turning point for the Joubert family, and their enemies, too.

What are the biggest challenges of writing historical fiction?
It's crucial to aim for authenticity when putting history on the page. I write imaginary characters and adventure storylines against the backdrop of real history after years of research. I always strive to ensure my characters are true to their 16th-century selves. You cannot put 21st-century attitudes and motivations into the mouths of women and men living 450 years ago. My aim is always to stand in another person's shoes, asking how I would behave if I had been walking beside a canal in Amsterdam in, say, 1578.

The City of Tears
by Kate Mosse
(Mantle, 560 pages, £20)

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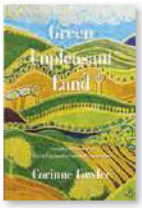
ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** AND **MATT ELTON**

COLONIALISM

Green Unpleasant Land
by Corinne Fowler
(Peepal Tree Press, 324 pages, £19.99)



What lies beneath our landscapes

The countryside has long been thought of as a bastion of Britishness, a rural idyll steeped in a nostalgic pastoral past. But Corinne Fowler offers a different perspective, revealing how rural landscapes have been shaped by colonial connections, conflict and oppression. This is self-professed "uncomfortable reading", intended to challenge preconceptions and raise awareness of often unpalatable truths.

CULTURAL

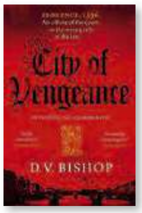
**Sailor Song:
The Shanties and Ballads of the High Seas**
by Gerry Smyth
(British Library, 160 pages, £14.99)

Warbling on the waves

In terms of surprising recent viral hits, sea shanties rank pretty high. Released early to capitalise on the phenomenon, this compendium of raucous melodies provides all the necessary historical background to understand some of the most popular sea-faring ditties. There are fantastic illustrations by Jonny Hannah, and the inclusion of lyrics and sheet music means you can even learn a shanty or two yourself.

FICTION

City of Vengeance
by DV Bishop
(Macmillan, 416 pages, £14.99)



Sin city

The appetite for historical crime fiction shows no signs of letting up, and this fast-paced debut from DV Bishop presents readers with another mystery to untangle. The "city of vengeance" in question is Renaissance Florence, a pulsing hub of culture, wealth and power. When a moneylender is found dead, officer Cesare Aldo takes on the city's shadiest elements to uncover a conspiracy and find the killer.

EXPLORATION

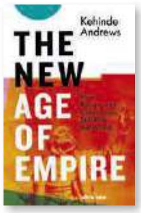
Icebound
by Andrea Pitzer
(Simon & Schuster, 320 pages, £20)

Survival tactics

Fortune did not favour Dutch explorer William Barents. During a expedition in the Far Arctic in 1597, Barents and his crew lost their ship to icebergs and found themselves stranded in one of the planet's most inhospitable environments for nine long months. American journalist Andrea Pitzer evocatively recounts their battle for survival as supplies diminished, storms raged and the cold took its toll.

GLOBAL

**The New Age of Empire:
How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World**
by Kehinde Andrews
(Allen Lane, 288 pages, £20)

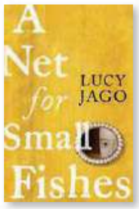


The past inside the present

Forensically highlighting the ways in which history and current affairs are bound together, this trenchant book argues that the societies of 2020 are still overwhelmingly shaped by the legacies of colonialism and racial prejudice. It's bold and impassioned, drawing the threads of the past right up to date in recent events such as the coronavirus pandemic and the killing of George Floyd in policy custody in 2020.

FICTION

A Net for Small Fishes
by Lucy Jago
(Bloomsbury, 352 pages, £16.99)

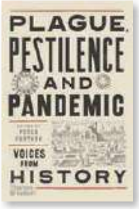


Sex and scandal

Drawing on a decade of research, this novel is based on a scandal that enthralled and shocked the Jacobean court. Frances Howard, wife of the Earl of Essex, was part of one of England's most powerful families; Anne Turner was a maidservant whose work drew her to the court of James VI & I. Lucy Jago dramatises their roles in the scandal, highlighting themes of power, sexuality and female friendship.

SOCIAL

**Plague, Pestilence and Pandemic:
Voices from History**
edited by Peter Furtado
(Thames and Hudson, 336 pages, £20)

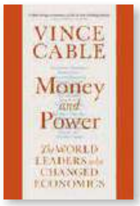


Spreading stories

As well as its devastating death toll, the coronavirus pandemic has disrupted society to such an extent that *everything* can feel unfamiliar. But, of course, people in other times and places lived through similar outbreaks of disease, and this collection of eyewitness accounts explores their experiences. From the Athenian plague to Aids, they offer insightful, moving parallels with our current moment.

ECONOMICS

**Money and Power:
The World Leaders Who Changed Economics**
by Vince Cable
(Atlantic, 400 pages, £20)



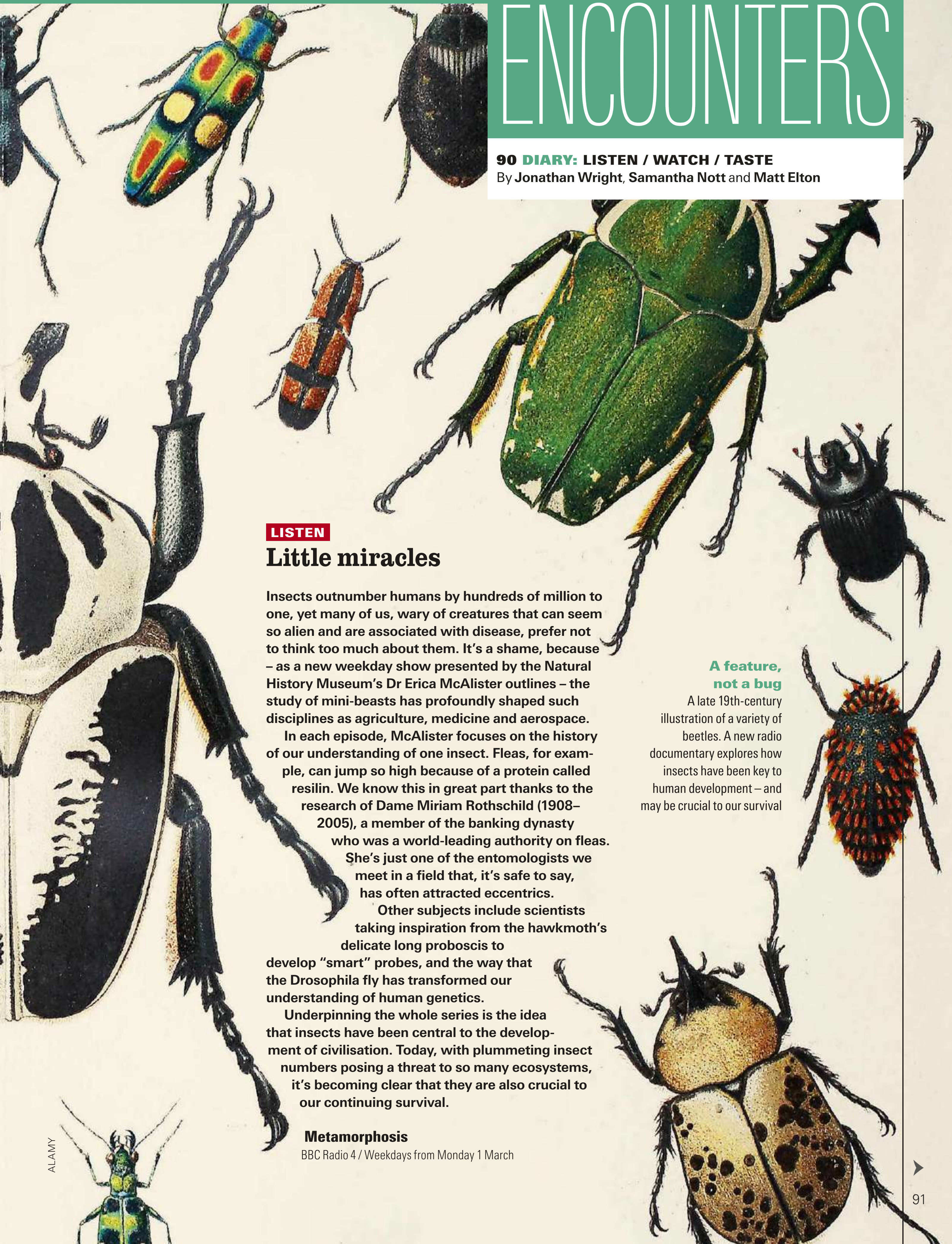
Political fortunes

Focusing on 16 world leaders who helped transform their nations' economies, the latest book from Vince Cable explores the relationship between money and power (fields in which Cable has much personal experience). Some of these stories will be familiar – Peel, Roosevelt and Thatcher all put in appearances – but other figures, such as Swedish leader Tage Erlander, may be less well known.

ENCOUNTERS

90 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / TASTE

By **Jonathan Wright**, **Samantha Nott** and **Matt Elton**



A feature, not a bug

A late 19th-century illustration of a variety of beetles. A new radio documentary explores how insects have been key to human development – and may be crucial to our survival

ALAMY

LISTEN

Little miracles

Insects outnumber humans by hundreds of million to one, yet many of us, wary of creatures that can seem so alien and are associated with disease, prefer not to think too much about them. It's a shame, because – as a new weekday show presented by the Natural History Museum's Dr Erica McAlister outlines – the study of mini-beasts has profoundly shaped such disciplines as agriculture, medicine and aerospace.

In each episode, McAlister focuses on the history of our understanding of one insect. Fleas, for example, can jump so high because of a protein called resilin. We know this in great part thanks to the research of Dame Miriam Rothschild (1908–2005), a member of the banking dynasty who was a world-leading authority on fleas. She's just one of the entomologists we meet in a field that, it's safe to say, has often attracted eccentrics.

Other subjects include scientists taking inspiration from the hawkmoth's delicate long proboscis to develop "smart" probes, and the way that the Drosophila fly has transformed our understanding of human genetics.

Underpinning the whole series is the idea that insects have been central to the development of civilisation. Today, with plummeting insect numbers posing a threat to so many ecosystems, it's becoming clear that they are also crucial to our continuing survival.

Metamorphosis

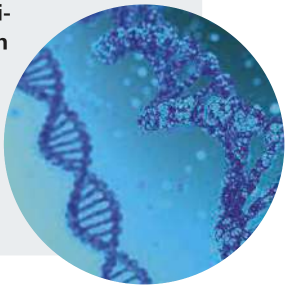
BBC Radio 4 / Weekdays from Monday 1 March

WATCH

Code breakers

Holding the promise of telling us where in the world our forebears lived, over-the-counter DNA kits are becoming increasingly popular with those researching their family trees. But our genes can unlock difficult secrets about ourselves – and our nearest and dearest, too.

That's especially the case when the results are analysed, as in a new three-part BBC series, by scientists at King's College London and the world-leading genetics team at the University of Leicester – the latter of which played a key role in identifying Richard III's remains. Each of the episodes is built around ordinary Britons asking for a DNA analysis as a way to help diagnose a mystery condition, to discover unknown relatives or to shed new light on a family secret.



DNA Clinic
Coming soon to BBC Two

Nathaniel Curtis and Olly Alexander (front) star in a drama that explores the impact of Aids on 1980s Britain's gay community

WATCH

Pride and prejudice

In May 1981, *New York Native*, a newspaper aimed at the city's gay population, ran the first news report about an "exotic new disease", Aids. The story of its initial spread, and its effect on the gay community in a homophobic era in which the epidemic was little understood and provoked huge fear, has still been surprisingly seldom told.

A new TV drama from Russell T Davies (*Queer as Folk*, *Doctor Who*) triumphantly makes good this lack, following a group of friends in London through the decade. Olly Alexander, from synth-pop trio Years & Years, leads the cast as 18-year-old Ritchie Tozer, and the likes of Keeley Hawes, Stephen Fry and Tracy Ann Oberman offer star power in supporting roles.

It's a Sin
All 4 / Streaming now

Historian and broadcaster Janina Ramirez on location at Knossos in Crete – among the sites to feature in her series on pioneering archaeologist-explorers

WATCH

Ancient remains, new insights

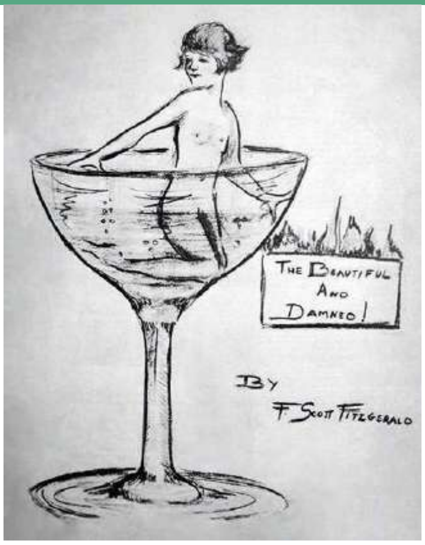
The work of archaeologists doesn't endure just because their finds shed fresh light on history, but because their interpretations of those discoveries also inevitably shape subsequent debates about the past. Take, for example, Arthur Evans (1851–1941), who played a key role in the excavation of the Bronze Age site of Knossos on Crete.

As Janina Ramirez notes in the second season of her excellent TV series about explorer-archaeologists, Evans had some fanciful notions. And yet he also saw clearly how Knossos pushed the story of European civilisation back in time.

This new run also sees Ramirez revisit the discoveries of the Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük in Turkey and the Oseberg Viking ship, preserved in Norway.

Raiders of the Lost Past with Dr Janina Ramirez
BBC Two & iPlayer / Friday 19 February

ALLEYCATS TV-BBC/CHANNEL 4



Zelda Fitzgerald's cover sketch for *The Beautiful and Damned*, set to be dramatised in a new BBC series

LISTEN

American tragedy

For all their wealth and privilege, characters in F Scott Fitzgerald's novels are rarely happy. Anthony Patch in *The Beautiful and Damned* is a case in point. At first glance, he's a man to be envied, the presumptive heir to a fortune, a socialite married to glamorous Gloria Gilbert. Together, their public persona is that of a golden couple.

Yet in their different ways, both are damaged figures. An unambitious dilettante, Patch's expectation of money in the future leaves him unable to focus on the present, at least beyond where the next drink or party is to be found. For her part, Gloria is obsessed with her looks and, while she loves Patch, she cannot imagine a future where her beauty has faded.

As the couple's money worries mount, a descent into alcoholism and depression beckons – prescient considering Fitzgerald's second novel was published in 1922, when the Jazz Age was still warming up and the catastrophic events of the end of the 1920s still lay far ahead.

Scripted by Robin Brooks, this new two-part adaptation is part of Radio 4's *Electric Decade* strand, which explores the 1920s through its literature and art. It stars Joel MacCormack (*Wolf Hall*) as Patch and rising star Jessica Hardwick as Gloria.

Electric Decade:
The Beautiful and Damned
BBC Radio 4 & BBC Sounds / Saturday 20 February

ALAMY

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"*You're Dead to Me* is different because we try to raise the level up to academic standards"

Historian and broadcaster **GREG JENNER** tells us about the return of his hit BBC podcast series, which sees academics and comedians join forces to bring the past alive through conversation injected with humour

***You're Dead To Me* aims to reach an audience that may not necessarily be interested in history. How do you approach this?**
The idea of the show is to broaden the appeal of history to those who have felt that the subject is dry, difficult, intimidating, challenging or boring. People have often thought: "We can make it fun and get celebrities involved." But when that happens, you inevitably bring the level of the knowledge down.

The aim of *You're Dead* is quite different in that we try to raise the level of the entertainment *up* to academic standards. We pair a comedian who doesn't know much about the subject with a top academic. Of course, the comedian is there to provide the jokes, but also to ask the questions people at home might want to ask.

Can you share some of the highlights from the new series?
We've done the Borgias with Professor Catherine Fletcher of Manchester Metropolitan University and [comedian] Phil Wang. That's very funny because the reputation of the Borgias is so sordid – sex, death, murder and poison – but Lucrezia Borgia ended up running a cheese emporium, which is not really what she's known for.

For the show on 16th-century female Irish pirate Gráinne O'Malley, our comedian was Catherine Bohart and our historian was Dr Gillian Kenny of Trinity College, Dublin. They immediately bonded over being two Irish people with an Englishman. Within five minutes, they had ganged up on me and stolen the podcast, and just spent the entire time taking the mick out of me!

Why are comedians so good on the show?
Every single time, the historian has come away saying, "The comedian asked really interesting questions – they made me think about the subject in a new way." After working on *Horrible Histories* as a historical consultant, that doesn't surprise me: comedians spend their lives pulling things apart. They do observational routines about how odd things are. So when you put them in a room with a historian who spends their life asking questions, they very quickly realise that they have got a lot in common. They think in the same way.

You're also hosting *Homeschool History* podcasts. What do those involve?
They're about 15 minutes long and aimed at seven and eight-year-olds, [with] silly sound effects, fun music and snippets of pop songs. But every episode is co-scripted with an expert. It's a way of contributing to the home-schooling situation [caused by the coronavirus pandemic], which is tiring and taxing for carers.

You're Dead to Me and **Homeschool History** are both available via BBC Sounds

Comedians Catherine Bohart and Phil Wang both feature in the new series of *You're Dead to Me*

Dating from the 1930s, this Canadian dessert is still enjoyed in the eastern province of Quebec today

TASTE

Pouding chômeur

The name of this Canadian dessert translates literally as "unemployed man's pudding", and it's thought to have been created during the Great Depression. Although its original iteration, made of sugar and water, would have been rather more humble, this lavish update features cream and maple syrup.

Difficulty: 4/10
Time: 20 mins to prepare and 50–60 mins to bake

INGREDIENTS

For the pudding batter:
190g flour
100g sugar
Half a teaspoon of salt
Three teaspoons of baking powder
60g butter, melted
120ml milk
One egg
One teaspoon of vanilla extract
For the syrup:
500ml maple syrup
480ml double cream

METHOD

Preheat oven to 175°C. Butter a 20cm x 20cm x 5cm baking dish. Combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add the butter, milk, egg and vanilla, and fold with a spatula until mixed well. Portion into six servings with a spoon and drop side by side into the dish.

Meanwhile, in a heavy saucepan, add cream and maple syrup and whisk lightly. Continue to stir over a medium-high heat until boiling, then boil hard for two minutes and pour immediately over the pudding batter. **Do not mix.** Bake for 50–60 minutes. Remove from oven, and serve warm.

Recipe from Food Gypsy: foodgypsy.ca/all-recipes/sweets-treats/cakes/pouding-chomeur-classic-quebecoise

LISTEN

Unacknowledged history

Rotha Lintorn-Orman pictured in 1929. She founded the British Fascisti in 1923, whose name points to its inspiration in the era's Italian politics

In 1923, inspired by Mussolini and a revelation while weeding, former Girl Guide activist Rotha Lintorn-Orman founded the British Fascisti. In the century since, despite one of our national myths being the idea of stubborn resistance against Nazism, homegrown fascism has been a consistent strand in British life.

But how and why have the anti-politics of hate and ultra-nationalism proved so enduring? These are questions explored by historian Camilla Schofield in a new three-part series.

She begins in 1934 with a rally staged by Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists at Olympia, a window on fascism in the years prior to 1939. The second programme is centred on the so-called battle of Lewisham in 1977, when protesters gathered to stop a march by the National Front. Finally, Schofield reaches the 21st century, when real-world gatherings have largely given way to atomised adherents communicating online.

Britain's Fascist Thread
BBC Radio 4 & BBC Sounds / Friday 19 February

WATCH

Beat generations

In the 1970s, hip hop was a music made by marginalised inner-city youth in the Bronx borough of New York City. Today, it's the most popular musical genre in the US, and probably the world. How did this happen?

That's a question explored in an excellent new music history series that approaches its subject by looking at specific songs. It explores in detail how tracks were made – as when Questlove, a drummer and the show's executive producer, talks beats – as well as putting them in a wider social and cultural context.

The episode on Kanye West's 2004 song 'Jesus Walks', for example, focuses in on the history of the choir sampled for the song, but also considers how this overtly spiritual music changed ideas about the way in which rap deals with religion.

Hip Hop: The Songs That Shook America
BBC iPlayer / Streaming now

Musician Questlove, one of the team behind a new series exploring the creation of some of hip hop's most important tracks

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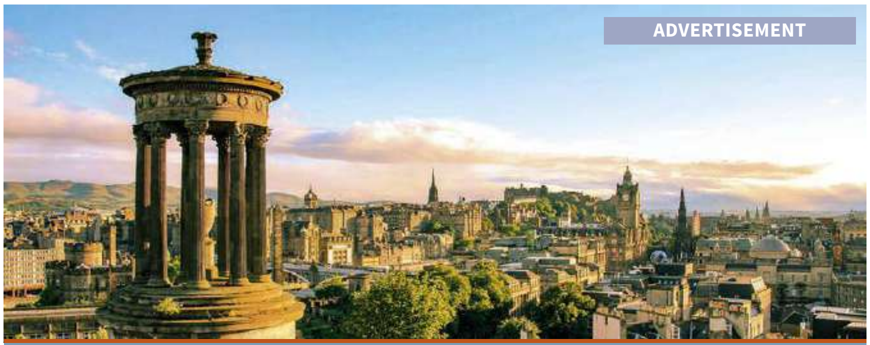

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PRIZE CROSSWORD

Across

7 City state destroyed in 146 BC by Roman general Lucius Mummius in the process of defeating the Achaean League (7)

8 The ____ Diamond, named in honour of the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne (7)

9 English railway pioneer, George ____ and his bridge-builder son, Robert (10)

11 President, later king of Albania, during whose reign the country came to be dominated by Mussolini's Italy (3)

12 A former secretary-general of the UN who became embroiled in controversy when running for the presidency of Austria (8)

13 ____ Rosenberg, Nazi ideologist, who became temporary leader of the Nazi movement during Hitler's imprisonment (6)

15 Byname (based on her married name) of Irish-born Mary Harris, a high-profile agitator for the rights of workers in 19th/20th-century USA (6,5)

19 German espionage organisation founded (in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles) in 1920 (6)

20 Flemish 16th-century cartographer, famous for his innovative map projection (8)

22 Ancient region, covering much of modern-day Syria, giving its name to an important Semitic language (4)

24 Flagship of Nelson's British fleet at the battle of Trafalgar (3,7)

25 William, early 19th-century English writer, an esteemed critic and essayist (7)

26 ____ Abbey in the Scottish Borders, thought to be the burial location of the heart of Robert the Bruce (7)

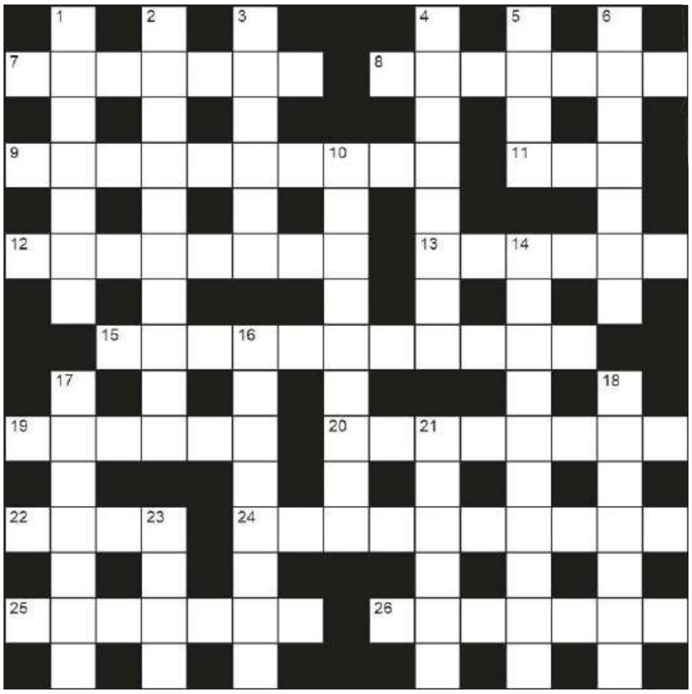
Down

1 Famed 18th-century Ottawa chief, a great leader of inter-tribal resistance against British rule in the Great Lakes area (7)

2 Now a term for variety theatre, it was originally a Greek stadium for chariot races, etc (10)

3 Seventh/eighth-century Anglo-Saxon theologian, sometimes called the "Father of English History" (2,4)

4 ____ ____, Basque navigator who led the surviving ships of Magellan's expedition (1519–21) to safety [shortened form of name] (4,4)



5 Porfirio ____, president of Mexico, who, after several decades of rule, was deposed in 1911 by the Mexican Revolution (4)

6 Historic measure of distances, roughly equivalent to three English miles (7)

10 Greek name of the ninth-century BC Assyrian queen, who, over succeeding generations, has been turned into a legendary warrior leader (9)

14 Celebrated 20th-century travel writer, made a dame commander of the order of the British empire in 1972 (5,5)

16 He was Japan's longest reigning emperor (8)

17 Welsh mining village, scene of a major disaster in 1966 caused by the collapse of a slag heap (7)

18 Term describing a style such as that of the Alhambra, Granada (7)

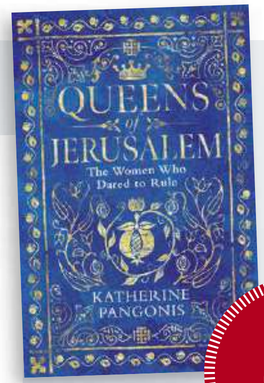
21 Term for a 13th–16th-century raider belonging to one of the gangs on the Anglo-Scottish border (6)

23 Family name of father and son 19th-century philosophers, exponents of utilitarianism (4)

....

Compiled by **Eddie James**

What is this popular architectural style called? *(see 18 down)*



Book worth **£20** for **5 winners**

Queens of Jerusalem: The Women Who Dared to Rule

By Katherine Pangonis

The stories of women have long been absent from accounts of the crusades. In her new book, Katherine Pangonis champions these tales, charting the lives of Jerusalem's trailblazing queens. (See her feature on page 34 of this issue.)

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, March 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***march2021@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **17 March 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the May 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our January 2021 crossword

Across 5 Anselm 7 Theresa 9/3 Mary Whitehouse 10 Escutcheon 12 Artois 14 Alhambra 15 Harriet Tubman 17 Alec Rose 19 Edmund 21 Grace Kelly 23/1 Hedy Lamarr 24 Goering 25 Prison

Down 2 Blue 4 Arnhem 6 Seymour 8 Sporran 11 Chartwell 13 Sailor King 15 Holyrood 16 Memphis 18 Cicero 20 Nodens 22 Yuri

Eight winners of *The Medieval Knight*:

A Lunness, Tyne and Wear; P Bowers, Somerset; D Rippon, Staffordshire; J Fitzpatrick, London; E Freer, Nottinghamshire; P Little, Hampshire; D Smale, Scottish Borders; S Skipper, Derbyshire

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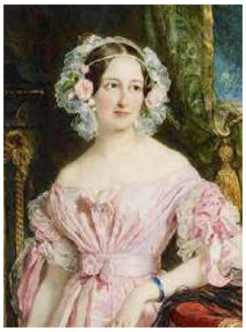

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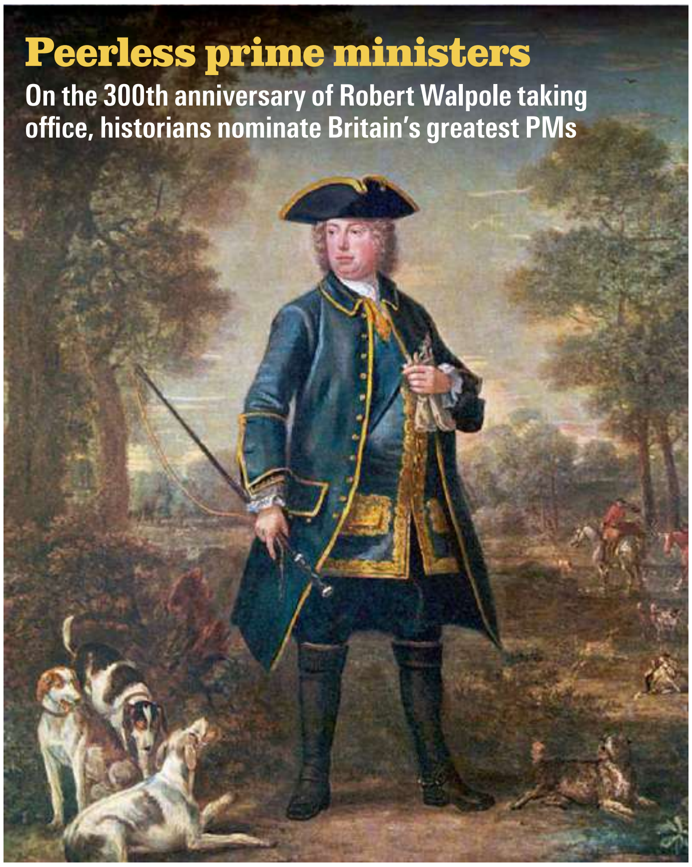

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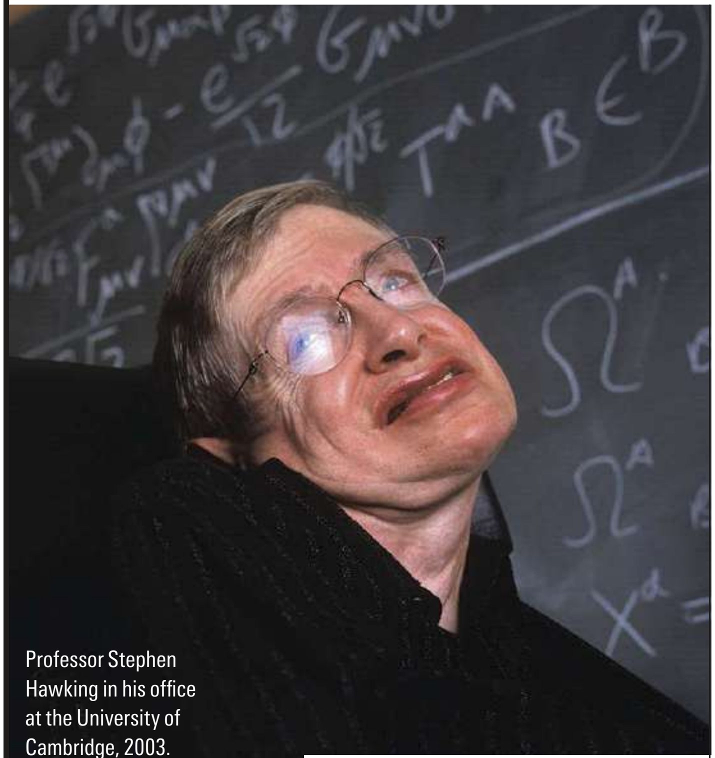
***Bobby Seagull,** University Challenge star, writer and broadcaster, chooses*

Stephen Hawking

1942–2018

Bobby Seagull, star of *University Challenge,* is a mathematician, teacher, writer and broadcaster. His book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Numbers*, is out now. His Twitter is @Bobby_Seagull



Professor Stephen Hawking in his office at the University of Cambridge, 2003. Bobby Seagull describes the late professor as a "rock star of a scientist"

When did you first hear about Stephen Hawking?

When I was at primary school, my elder brother Davey unearthed an old copy of *Reader's Digest* and found an article about Stephen Hawking. He then bought a copy of *A Brief History of Time* that stared at me on our bookshelf for years. It was only while studying for my A-level physics that I read the book and finally got to understand Hawking's insights into the universe.

What made Hawking a hero?

For more than 50 years he defied a disease that should have killed him in five. Obviously he's a rock star of a scientist, but he is also a family hero. When applying to the University of Cambridge for his undergrad studies, Davey (who has used a wheelchair since childhood) wrote to Hawking for advice. Hawking's reply inspired my brother to apply successfully to Cambridge – and all four boys in my family subsequently went to Oxbridge.

Hawking's correspondence with my brother changed my family's path. My brother later met Hawking several times, even having an electric wheelchair race against him (Davey won!). Hawking also stayed in Davey's wheelchair-friendly room once in Cambridge. Their photo takes pride of place in our family living room.

Is there anything you don't hugely admire about him?

Hawking believed that given the vastness of the universe, it is likely that aliens exist. But if aliens were to visit us, he thought the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus landed in America – which didn't turn out well for the Native Americans. He believed that aliens might pillage the Earth for resources, but I'm more optimistic!

Can you see any parallels between your lives?

Despite his debilitating illness, Hawking was one of science's great popularisers, conveying ideas about theoretical physics and cosmology to millions, and inspiring a generation of people to study science. On a smaller scale, I'd love to inspire children and adults, through my teaching, TV shows and writing, to share my passion for numbers.

What would you ask Hawking if you could meet him?

I'd ask if he'd be happy to play a cameo role in my next BBC series of *Monkman & Seagull's Genius Guides*!

Who would have won if you were on rival *University Challenge* teams?

I would just be in awe playing against him. His knowledge of science would crush mine. However, my pop culture knowledge of hip-hop, film and even *Love Island* would win me points too!

Bobby Seagull was talking to York Membery

IN PROFILE

Stephen Hawking was a British theoretical physicist and cosmologist, best known for his book *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (1988), which has sold more than 10 million copies. In 1963 the Cambridge academic was diagnosed with motor neurone disease; he died aged 76, after living with the disease for more than 50 years. The twice-married father of three's life story was told in the hit biopic *The Theory of Everything* (2014).

> " Hawking's correspondence with my brother changed my family's path. My brother even had an electric wheelchair race with him "

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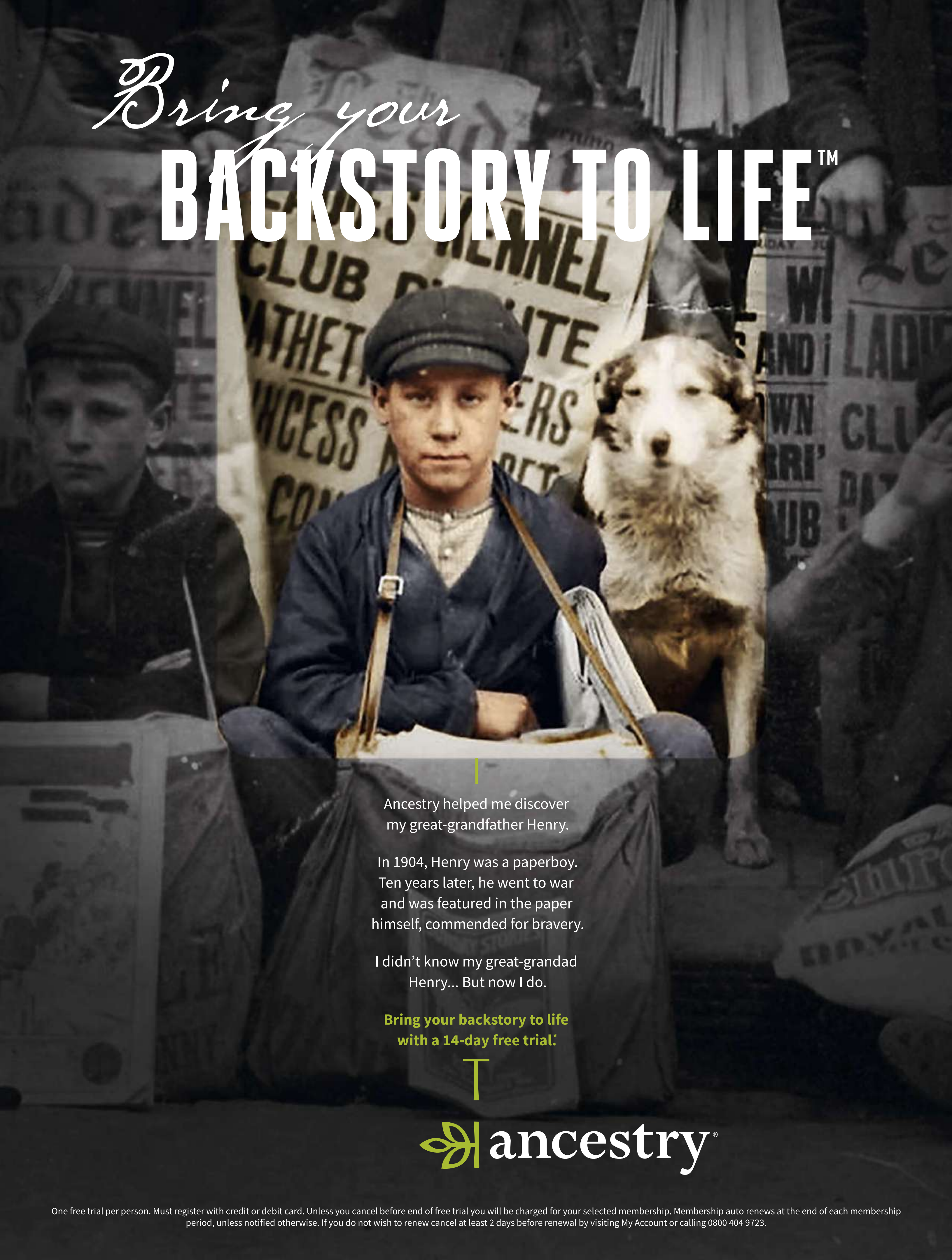

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